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ABSTRACT

Seven articles on linguistics and language teaching, two book reviews, and four conference summaries are included in this volume. The articles include: "Laying Down the Law? Reflecting on Course Design in Progress" (Desmond Allison, Robin Corcos, Agnes Lam); "Beyond (F)utilitarianism: English as an Academic Purpose" (Alastair Pennycook); "On the Psychological Plausibility of 'Topic' as a Construct in Research on Writing" (David Nunan); "A Brief Critique of Chomsky's Challenge to Classical Phonemic Phonology" (Liu Ngar-Fun); "Student-Produced Video Documentary: Hong Kong as a Self-Access Resource" (David Gardner); "Designing an Ability Scale for English Across the Range of Secondary School Forms" (David Coniam); and "The Political Vocabulary of Hong Kong English" (Phil Benson). (MSE)

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Hong Kong Papers In Linguistics And Language Teaching

香港大學語言理論教學研究

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Policy

Hong Kong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching publishes work in a number of language-related areas including general linguistics, teaching methodology, curriculum development, testing and evaluation, educational technology, CALL, language planning, and bilingual education. Articles on the teaching of languages other than English are also welcome. We are interested in articles that specifically address language teaching in Hong Kong, deal with the surrounding region, or are of particular concern to this region (e.g. language learning in other Chinese contexts, or Chinese students learning languages overseas).

Submission Categories

The Editors welcome contributions of five broad types: articles, reports of 'work in progress', responses to articles published in previous issues, book reviews and conference reports. Other categories will be considered if and when they are submitted. Contributions should not have been previously published, nor should they be under consideration for publication elsewhere. Full length articles should include an abstract of not more than 200 words and biographical data in not more than 50 words.

All contributions should be addressed to:

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All authors should submit a disc-copy of their article (preferably Word for Windows or Word Perfect) and one hard copy. Manuscripts should be double-spaced and all tables, figures and illustrations should be **camera-ready**. Authors will receive a complimentary copy of the issue and 10 off prints of their article.

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Editorial

This 17th issue of the Hong Kong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching marks a turning point in its history. It is the first issue in which all the articles have been fully externally reviewed. It is hoped that this important feature will encourage authors to submit articles to us which they would previously only have considered submitting to recognised international journals. A diverse range of interests are represented in this issue, from discussions of more abstract, theoretical and philosophical issues within applied linguistics to the description of practical techniques for language teaching and testing. We would, as always, like to encourage colleagues to submit articles, book reviews, research or conference reports and, continuing our innovation from this issue, poems, or indeed any other word form, for consideration. We would also welcome submissions for a ***FORUM*** section, where we hope to encourage debate about published articles or other areas of interest in applied linguistics and language teaching.

In this issue

The first two articles in this issue are concerned with the problematic nature of making choices about topical content in EAP courses. In the first paper, **Desmond Allison, Robin Corcos** and **Agnes Lam** characterise the issues and tensions that arose in the design of a new course for first-year students in the faculty of Law. Whilst arguing for a learner-centred/learning centred approach which will allow course objectives to be renegotiated in the light of future feedback, the authors also remind us of the practical constraints of temporal and expository sequencing in initial course design and of the need to respond appropriately to particular contexts and institutional settings. They reject on ethical grounds "the mere illusion of choice" which occurs when negotiated curricula are manipulated so that learners are led to believe they are sharing in the decision making processes. Instead they offer a principled framework based on strong ideological foundations which has attainable philosophical expectations and realistic practical applications.

Taking a rather different approach to the question of content, **Alastair Pennycook** argues that EAP often degenerates into what he calls "futilitarianism": the content of courses may lack serious pedagogical rationales (futility) and EAP courses may be seen as little more than a service industry to other disciplines (utilitarianism). He goes on to argue that this dual problem may be overcome by questioning the idea of English *for* academic purposes and instead focusing on English *as* academic purpose, or what he calls the *worldliness* of English. Taking issue with some aspects of

critical language awareness , he proposes "a form of language awareness that aims to investigate students' understandings of language, to explore the ambivalent feelings that students often have towards the language, to develop ways of looking at English in Hong Kong that examine its relationships to colonialism, gender and socio-economic status".

Continuing with the theme of 'topic', this time in the context of research in writing, **David Nunan** takes as the point of departure for his paper the notion that "...'topic' is a psychological construct rather than a linguistic concept, and, as such, resides within the creator/processor of the text, rather than within the text itself." His study into the salience of sentence topic in written discourse provides empirical evidence that the notion of 'topic' can be highly problematic for both native and non-native speakers alike. Results suggest that the initial assertion is too simplistic and that amongst identified factors which react in a complex way, degree of command of experiential content is a primary factor in the recognition and use of referential cohesive devices.

Arguing from a theoretical rather than an empirical point of view , **Liu Ngar-Fun** contends that Chomsky's critique of phonemic phonology is in many ways unjustified and certainly misguided since it was not based on a proper understanding of the motivation for phonemic phonology. She suggests that Chomsky overlooked the more practical purpose behind phonemic phonology: "...phonemic representations were not founded for generating simple, elegant and yet expressive phonological rules, or explaining the nature of language as such; but for the purpose of teaching spoken languages". She concludes, therefore, that Chomsky's generative phonology should be "regarded as an alternative account of sound structure rather than a valid critique of phonemic phonology".

Returning to a theme dealing with one of the practical aspects of language teaching, that of developing learner autonomy, **David Gardner** discusses the feasibility of extending self-access contexts outside of designated self-access centres and into the wider educational environment. He reports on a project which involved learners producing a video-documentary film, thus providing an authentic environment in which they could practice the target language, in this case, English.

Another theoretical development within applied linguistics which has been examined for practical application, that of using Item Response Theory (IRT) techniques to analyse language test items, is described in the paper by **Dave Coniam**. Aimed at language teachers rather than psychometricians, Coniam gives a brief overview of the basic principles of IRT before describing an ambitious project to construct a common scale covering the entire ability range of students in Hong Kong secondary schools.

Using data from his computer corpus of Hong Kong newspaper reports in English, **Phil Benson** argues that distinctive lexical features from this data can be explained in terms of a dominant ideology of 'colonialism in transition'. Significantly, he takes issue with much of the current work on "world Englishes", suggesting that it has failed to deal adequately with the relationship between social context and linguistic form and instead has merely assumed that language variation is a mirror of social, environmental, or cultural contexts. By employing the concept of ideology, he suggests, it is possible to see how social conditions are *refracted* rather than *reflected* in language forms. Benson then goes on first to analyse the nature of this dominant colonial ideology in various speeches and statements by Chris Patten, and second to show how these ideological premises become embodied in the language through specific processes of lexicalisation.

In the Reviews section, **Roger Berry** reviews in detail the new *Longman Language Activator*, and **Valerie Pickard** takes a critical look at Norman Bird's *A First Handbook on the Roots of English*. Four Conference Reports complete this issue of *Hong Kong Papers*.

Vivien Berry
Alastair Pennycook

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Laying Down The Law?
Reflecting On Course Design in Progress

Desmond Allison, Robin Corcos & Agnes Lam[1]
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This paper sets out to articulate and reflect upon the tension that can arise between prescription and negotiation in designing a short course in English for academic purposes. This tension, which the authors believe can eventually benefit learners and encourage learning, is explored in the context of an account of work in the initial design phase of a course for first-year law students at the University of Hong Kong, with special attention being paid to the choice of topical content for the course. The paper considers how constraints of sequentiality (temporal and expository phases or "stages") can be reconciled with other aspects of a curriculum, how the relationship may develop between the ideological position(s) of the course designer(s) and an initial specification of course goals, and how both a statement of goals and various implementational constraints may bear upon the course itself. Implications are drawn for accountability to learners and others with an interest in curricular decisions and their consequences.

Introduction

Recent accounts of curriculum design emphasise that a curriculum does not develop in a simple linear fashion that starts from a needs specification and proceeds via syllabus design and materials production to stages of implementation, assessment and finally evaluation of the curriculum. Following Johnson (1989), we take a curriculum to include "all the relevant decision making processes of all the participants" (Johnson, 1989, p. 1). This conception gives teachers and learners a major ongoing role in constituting a curriculum through the continuing choices that they make as a course develops; these choices will also affect the future starting point of later realisations of that course. An entire curriculum, then, is not something that is developed by course designers. Drawing on studies of teacher practice, Nunan (1988) proposes "a negotiated curriculum model... in which much of the consultation, decision making and planning is informal and takes place during the course of programme delivery" (p. 3). Hargreaves (1989) challenges "linear and discrete" treatments of "the three major aspects of a project - design, implementation and evaluation" and puts forward a cyclical and integrated view of these aspects (Hargreaves, 1989, p. 35); Hargreaves uses the deliberately cumbersome term "DES-IMPL-EVALU-IGN" to evoke the inadequacy of linear sequence in conveying this kind of relationship. Brindley (1989) similarly envisages a cyclical process of experience and consultation in learner-centred classes that enable objectives to be renegotiated in light of feedback. Clark (1987) extends negotiation processes beyond the lifetime of a single course in calling for continuing commitment to curriculum renewal.

Linear sequence nevertheless remains a powerful constraint upon both texts and procedures, perhaps most markedly so when a course is first being prepared. Our concerns in this paper will be situated in such a planning situation. Though initial course design must anticipate all aspects of a curriculum, it appears directly to involve only the first two of the "four stages or decision points in policy implementation" proposed by Johnson (1989, p. 2):

- curriculum planning
- ends/means specification

1 The order of the authors' names (coincidentally alphabetical) reflects the extent of their contributions to the paper.

- programme implementation
- classroom implementation.

Emphasising that an initial analysis of needs (ends) does not itself produce a teaching syllabus, Brindley (1989, p. 64) nevertheless observes that some form of needs analysis appears indispensable as a starting point in course design. For reasons of space and our own focus, we shall not discuss theoretical issues in needs analysis here: Brindley (1989) and Berwick (1989) both offer thoughtful accounts of different kinds of "needs" and of various problems and limitations in making use of this concept, including ways in which we might usefully distinguish between needs identified by analysts and those expressed or experienced by learners.

Course design in a context

In this paper, we shall attempt to characterise issues and tensions that arise during the initial phase of course design, with particular reference to the development of a 40-hour English enhancement course for first-year Law students at the University of Hong Kong (HKU). A starting point in course design appears to us to be required if learners on arrival are to receive clear indications of the initial expectations of teachers across different classes on "the same" course. A common frame of reference for a course also has implications for such matters as comparability of workload, and assessment procedures across classes, which are important to learners and others concerned with a course. Given these convictions and a commitment to action, it becomes important to ascertain and evaluate what happens when such a frame of reference is established, who has a say in this, what issues are determined by the initial frame and what are left open to judgments or preferences of teachers and learners during later implementational stages or decision points in a curriculum.

A course is planned within a context of earlier decisions and persisting assumptions, not all of which have necessarily been articulated. Robinson (1991) observes that "any well established ESP centre or other ELT institution has its own ideology relating to course design, to syllabus type, to the description of language and to the nature of language learning" (p. 35). In this light, we believe that course designers need to make explicit their understanding of their own ideological stance(s) as (members of) a course team and how this stance relates - in terms of realisation or contrast, for example - to the prevailing or emerging ideology of the centre in which they teach. Such explicitness has its dangers. Although a position statement that is open to discussion is intellectually and ethically preferable, the impact of a specified "policy" may render it harder for those most committed to that policy to reconsider their stance later. The tension between a maintenance of purposeful action and an openness to alternatives poses a constant challenge to course designers.

In light of the commitment made by many teaching centres (we would include our own) to responsible experimentation with new approaches, Robinson (1991) asserts that: the key question for any new ESP course is how far can and will the course designers modify their existing approaches. How far will the ESP course represent an innovation? (p. 35)

This is, at any rate, a significant question for the course design stage. Before giving a reflective account of course design in progress, we need to outline what we see as the existing approach constituting our point of departure within our teaching centre and more widely in the university. We shall then indicate difficulties that can arise in promoting genuine negotiation in a curriculum whose parameters have already been set by course designers and others in positions of power, influence and responsibility.

Some of the principles that are highly valued and actively pursued in course design in the English Centre (EC) at HKU are teachers' responsiveness to learners, encouragement of diversity in teacher and learner activity, and encouragement of learning through tasks or projects rather than from didactic teaching. Whether the underlying philosophy is "learner-centred" (Nunan, 1988) or "learning-centred" (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987) is a matter we leave open at this point, while noting that learners themselves, particularly in our context, are not necessarily averse to didactic teaching. In a teaching-learning situation where most learners come to HKU with more than ten years' experience of English in schools, EC courses are designed to enhance academic

communication in English in a broad sense, and especially to develop learners' capacities to focus on an issue, and to articulate a response or reaction to it, while taking account of source materials (texts or other data). Reasons for this emphasis include the wish to provide a new context for advanced language learning and practice (not excluding attention to "basics" that arise), a professional recognition that learners do in fact learn different things in different ways in the course of class activities, and a conscious rejection of a "remedial" philosophy in favour of an educational account of English language teaching undertaken at university level. This broadly sketched set of values and understandings constitutes one major frame of reference as decisions about courses are made.

The decisions of course designers are not formulated in an institutional vacuum. In our case, the EC is expected to design and run English enhancement courses for all undergraduates, normally in their first year, by 1995. This policy decision by the university's Senate in 1991 provides the framework for our choice of goals and expected tasks as our group designs an English course for Law students.

Room for negotiation?

Sceptical accounts of 'negotiation' with learners over curriculum choices portray this process as open to cynical manipulation. Referring to schools, Kohn (1993) attacks "the practice of letting children *think* they are making a decision when they have no real power to do so" (Kohn, 1993, p. 254). Wilkins (1987) remarks that he has "always felt that if the process of negotiation with learners were really to be taken seriously, it should be extended to negotiating whether English should be learned at all... Similarly, any process of negotiation would be a deceit if it were merely an indirect way of leading learners towards objectives that had already been set" (Wilkins, 1987, p. 226).[1]

'Negotiations' that take place within a framework of predetermined decisions are unlikely to satisfy those who would prefer to contest or reshape the framework itself (e.g. students wishing to avoid a compulsory course on their chosen degree programme). Yet attempts to negotiate aspects of a curriculum within that framework are not necessarily deceitful or manipulative, and some degree of negotiation over who does what during course implementation is clearly a fact of life. More generous interpretations of teachers' and course designers' motives and practices can be suggested, such as providing a sense of direction for the course - in the senses both of a purposeful orientation and a measure of control to this end - while also seeking to involve learners in making choices about their own learning, on the grounds that this can motivate learners and encourage subsequent learning. (Slimani, 1992, offers evidence that topical choice by learners in classroom discourse is more salient to other learners than topics introduced by the teacher.) Learners may quite reasonably consider it part of the teacher's responsibility to promote learning and to ensure as far as possible that class time is spent in pursuing learning goals. (Wong-Fillmore, 1985, discusses the contribution, in some class settings, of the teacher's role in structuring activities that promote learning.) What seems to us crucial for fair practice is that negotiations that a teacher initiates with learners should take place on issues on which learners' views and wishes can actually influence outcomes (an example might be the choice of a class research topic for a small project). Any mere illusion of learner choice, on matters in which a prior decision by a teacher or another authority is actually being dissimulated, is something that we would contest on ethical and practical grounds, favouring instead an explicit decision that is clearly explained by the teacher with reference to the educational goals of the course.

[2] Charges that 'negotiation' in course design is only a semblance are not confined to discussions with learners. Commenting on the ambivalence of English teachers towards judgments of subject teachers, Raimes (1991) judges that when subject-area faculty "do not support what ESL teachers and researchers expect, it is tempting to discount their perceptions" (Raimes, 1991, p. 417). While it is indeed important not to set aside inconvenient truths, we also suggest that faculty and others still expect ESL course designers to exercise judgment in taking account of the often conflicting information and views they receive.

Course design in progress: an illustration

Needs analysis

In setting out to design a 40-hour English enhancement course for first-year Law students at HKU, we were conscious of the constraints and perspectives placed on course development and implementation by institutional logistics, by views and values that characterise our own teaching context, and by the need to take account during planning of the cyclic nature of a negotiated curriculum. As a first stage in designing our course, we went ahead with several fact-finding tasks to identify areas of observable or expressed needs from two main perspectives: those of law students and law teachers. To a certain extent, interactive processes in the law classroom were also explored. This needs analysis was undertaken late in the academic year, and outcomes of the analysis did not directly affect the students we consulted.

Our needs analysis proceeded in four stages:

Stage 1 Interviews with law students
Stage 2 Interviews with law teachers
Stage 3 Observation of law classes
Stage 4 A questionnaire survey

Four English Centre teachers were involved in this exercise. Only a brief general account of procedures and outcomes can be given here. Some information that relates to our choice of topical content in designing the course will receive attention at a later stage.

Stage 1 Learner interviews.
Each teacher interviewed students in groups of not more than five for about an hour. Altogether 60 students were interviewed in 14 sessions. Each teacher took notes and wrote an account of each interview; two of the four teachers had recorded interviews. On a basis of previously agreed guidelines for teachers, all the interviews gave attention to the nature of the tasks that students had the greatest difficulty with, the law course(s) they found most problematic and what they would have liked an English course tailored for them to focus on. Each session was otherwise free to develop according to interests and initiatives of individual teachers and students.

Stage 2 Law teacher interviews.
Twelve first-year law teachers were interviewed separately for about an hour by individual English Centre teachers. Teachers had an initial checklist of topics, but did not attempt to structure the interviews tightly. The law teachers' views were sought especially on topics such as:

- how homogeneous is the student population in terms of English language competence
- how well are students coping with lectures/tutorials and the related readings
- what are the typical tasks that students have to perform in tutorials and how well do they succeed
- how can an English course fit into the law curriculum: e.g. whether certain students should be exempted; how many contact hours in a week are desirable and feasible; whether a pairing is possible between a law course and the English course in order to promote appropriate text based activities and mutual reinforcement of course goals.

Stage 3 Observation of classes.
One lecture, one seminar and two tutorials, about an hour long each, were observed so that course designers could get some firsthand impressions of classroom behaviour. Observers took notes and wrote short accounts of what they had seen. More extended and systematic comparisons were not feasible within the timescale of the needs analysis.

Stage 4 Questionnaire survey.
A questionnaire was designed to obtain a profile of the demographic background of the law students at HKU and, in light of information from the previous stages, to identify more precisely the extent to which different learning needs were felt to be important. The questionnaire was administered in a law lecture and 87 students responded. The lecture audience was not wholly representative of the year group (150 students): students with lower English language scores (grade D Use of English) and mature students appear to have been under-represented. Mature students in the sample tended to rate themselves as having fewer problems, but their responses regarding an English course were not distinctive.

Outcomes

The findings from each of the above activities were written up, compared and discussed by the four teachers to offer, within limits of time, a well grounded interpretation of the learners' communicative needs in the Law Faculty. Individual differences in focus and emphasis among the teachers were apparent (e.g. one teacher commented on critical awareness of language and educational matters among members of the law faculty; another reported work with students to ascertain reading speed), but these perspectives proved complementary rather than incompatible. Our emerging interpretation suggested a profile of learner needs with three most salient characteristics:

1. Most have difficulty with legal reading. These difficulties concerned both the quantity and the nature of reading that was assigned.
2. Most would like to have more oral work in class.
3. Most would prefer the English course to focus on legal English, rather than general English.

Although many other needs or areas of interest were also mentioned, our needs analysis suggested that we could best serve our prospective learners on an initial EAP course by preparing a course that would be very much based on legal text with a heavy emphasis on reading interpretation and oral argumentation. (A separate course aiming to improve students' legal research and writing skills already formed part of the law curriculum.) Such a course appeared best to accommodate what we had found to be the most salient observed and self-perceived needs of first-year law students.

Course design: selection of topical content

As course designers, we needed to arrive at some kind of synthesis of the body of information we had collected, and consequently to determine course goals and develop a curriculum framework. We were conscious that any negotiations on these matters before the course was actually implemented would only involve two parties, the course designers and the law tutors. It is at this stage, when course designers are physically and temporally isolated from learners, and are acutely aware of resource limitations and deadlines, that the most well intentioned of course developers are in danger of moving too far in the direction of a prescribed course product and away from the adoption of strategies that will encourage negotiated curriculum development as the course actually takes place. Nevertheless, decisions had to be made which would, inevitably, foreclose certain options and pre-empt the negotiation of dependent issues.

The primary aim of decisions made by course designers in a planning stage is to maximize the efficiency of curricula, which Yalden (1987, p.86) has described as lying along two dimensions: 'pragmatic' (in our case the efficient utilization of 40 course contact hours) and 'pedagogic' (economy in the management of the learning process). It is not possible here to examine all the decisions that we made, and we have elected to pursue our concerns in this paper by commenting on the choice of topical content for the course we have designed for law students. We will look briefly at the 'negotiation' process which preceded it, the reasons for our eventual

selection of content and the implications of our choices for further negotiation once the course begins. We are specially interested in the implications of our choice at one level of generality (to focus on `legal' English) for choice at another level (which of five possible first-year law course `contents' should we select?). It seems to us that our first choice is well motivated in terms of views expressed by students and staff, as well as professional considerations on our side, but it needs explicit justification nonetheless. Our second level of content choice, which is more narrowly motivated, will provide a point of interesting tension between what we were told, especially by students, and our own eventual choice of topical focus.

The first choice: legal English

In envisaging a course oriented towards 'legal' content, we were not simply applying an institutionally sanctioned set of 'widely valued principles in course design' of the kind mentioned earlier. Indeed, only a minority of the enhancement courses offered so far at HKU by the EC have adopted a 'narrow angle' view of content. Our ESP Engineering and Science courses, for example, derive their content more from longer term professional communicative needs of the learners than from the immediate demands of the academic context. However, we took (and continue to hold) the view that a content-based curriculum appears, at least *prima facie*, to be particularly appropriate to the legal syllabus. There are at least two sets of reasons for this: all students follow a common curriculum, and language plays a central, demanding and distinctive role in that curriculum. On the first point, we were aware of potential advantages, in terms of student motivation and task focus, of adjunct courses when ESL students share the same subject content (Snow and Brinton, 1988; Johns, 1990). Regarding the second point, Bhatia (1989) remarks that:

> Of all the specialist disciplines that an ESP practitioner may be called upon to design and teach language support courses for, perhaps in none of them the need to integrate the specialist content and the language used to communicate it is greater than in Law (Bhatia, 1989, p. 223)

Howe (1990), and Harris (1992) have subsequently supported this approach with respect to English for academic legal purposes (EALP), which rests on the view of the legal profession itself that legal concepts and the language through which they are expressed form a dense and precisely interwoven texture. In this respect law differs from other disciplines, particularly the sciences and technologies, which often have available alternative graphic and symbolic codes through which to convey meanings. It needs to be kept in mind also that successful law students will need to attain particularly high standards of precision and rigour in specialised uses of language. Our initial orientation to this approach to course content was, therefore, largely linguistically motivated; we were aware that the content of the law syllabus would be more likely than a 'para-legal' specification of content to generate the kinds of course structures and tasks that could effectively address the needs of law students needs within the restricted time frame of the course.

Any pedagogic advantage, though, could quickly be nullified if a content-based approach proved unwelcome to learners. When we asked students and teachers in the course of interviews to react to the idea of a closely content based course, we in fact elicited a generally, though by no means universally, positive response. Extracts from our notes of these meetings, presented in Figure 1, exemplify a range of views. Most responses, nevertheless, were either sceptical about the value of a general English course at some remove from the language of law or at least saw a focus on legal language as an added benefit. In the questionnaire survey, 50 out of 71 student responses concerning the single most important area for an English course to concentrate on also specified some aspect of legal English. Staff views, while varied, were predominantly favourable to a focus on legal content, provided that English teachers were not daunted by this prospect.

Figure 1. A selection (from teachers' notes) of staff and student views on course content.

Staff	Students
'She does not believe in the efficacy of a separate course in English or in the present Legal Research and Writing course - skill divorced from substance, although when I outlined a possible adjunct model of an English course she voiced doubts as to whether it would work.'	'In terms of topics, students expressed a desire for controversial current issues (something other than the law.'
'The problem is with English, not legal English.'	'Not really necessary to concentrate on simple basic English - we need a course to guide us to read judgments, law texts, some other just more specialized texts.'

In short, we eventually opted for a close focus on legal content because it seemed to be the most efficient way to proceed on both linguistic and motivational grounds. However, as far as the minority of students who saw the course in terms of more broadly-based content are concerned, our decision means that negotiations on this issue are, for the time being, over. In effect, we have allowed our own reasoning to take precedence over whatever reasons some of the students may have had for not wanting a content-based course. This already raises the question of how far course-designers can go in imposing their decisions on a significant minority of learners, and on what issues they can do so, while continuing to lay legitimate claim to a learner-centred orientation.

The second choice: tort law

The topical content of the English enhancement course for Law students at HKU was eventually made explicit in the following general statement of course goals:

> 'To enhance the linguistic and communication skills needed by students to solve legal (and in particular, tort) problems...'

Learners, it has been decided, will work not just on 'legal' problems but on a sub-set of 'tort' problems. The first year law course comprises five, roughly equally weighted content areas of which tort law is just one: the other courses are contract law, legal research and writing, law and society, and legal system. How and why, then, was tort law chosen as the specific topical focus for the English enhancement course?

There was no unanimous or clearly dominant view among law staff and students on a preferred choice of adjunct course. In interviews, the large majority of both staff and students had mentioned two of the five courses, Law and Society and Legal System, as problematic. On the other hand, staff had pointed to tort law and to a lesser extent contract law as the most basic and generalisable courses in terms of legal principles. In our later follow-up questionnaire, when we asked which subject area would provide 'the most suitable content focus' for the English Enhancement course, most student respondents favored Legal System (30%), Legal Research and Writing (21%) and Contract (20%). Only 12% opted for Tort Law, and only 10% mentioned Law and Society (despite the earlier prominence of Law and Society in terms of perceived difficulty). The questionnaire did not provide for second choices (though a few "other" responses gave two choices, tort being one) and was administered too late to allow further follow-up interviews with students.

A decision on course content was eventually made by the course coordinator. He opted for tort law as the most suitable focus on grounds of curriculum organisation, feasibility and generalisability. In taking this position, this staff member, who has a first degree in Law, assumed a role as 'knowledgeable arbitrator', albeit a partial one - his partiality, of course, being directed towards the team's collective purpose of carrying the design of the curriculum a stage further. This planning decision was explained to and endorsed by the course design team as a whole.

Since it clearly does not reflect a `first past the post' choice on the part of student respondents, the choice of tort law as focus calls for scrutiny. First of all, the choice of one single subject area needs justification. Another approach to legal English would have been to select topics from each of the five courses and to structure the course around some kind of thematic, skills or genre-based linkage between them. However, this ostensibly attractive solution appeared to the course designers to have at least three serious drawbacks. Firstly, teachers would need to understand all the subject areas in some depth; secondly, in the absence of any explicit attempt on the part of the Law Department itself to synthesise some kind of metalegal knowledge structure from all four subject areas, we might perhaps have been seen as going beyond our brief as language teachers; thirdly, this strategy would in any case not have substantially increased opportunities for in-course negotiation of content with students, because the range of content involved would have required careful pre-selection and structuring. Deriving content from one course alone, therefore, remained our preferred option. Moreover, this strategy appeared to offer the added benefit of providing the element of thematic continuity within which skills could be recycled (a consideration of pedagogic efficiency).

The decision to focus on a single subject area was motivated by the need to employ resources efficiently. We had proceeded on the assumption, and this is, of course, a debatable assumption in any situation, that as course designers and teachers we would at some point need to know as much about whatever content we focused on as our students (see Robinson, 1991, pp. 84-88 for a full discussion of this issue). It was clear that we would only be able to reach this standard by delimiting the content base of our course. (The basic reading requirement for the tort course is some 750,000 words, for all five courses, probably somewhere in the region of 5 million). We would also need to select a course that was relatively accessible to non-specialists, both to make things more manageable for teachers and to ensure that what was learned was relevant to `legal English' and not just to some exclusive area of specialisation. In the light of advice from the head of the law department, these considerations effectively restricted our initial options to just two choices: tort law or contract law.

The tort course appeared to offer the best possibilities for maximizing pragmatic and pedagogic efficiencies. The tort course was eventually chosen mainly because it gave us access to the central function of the academic legal process: problem solving. Its content and procedures are therefore well suited to the structuring of a language curriculum around it, particularly one which itself envisages a problem-solving approach to language learning. Problem solving is not, of course, uniquely a function of the law of tort; it plays a pivotal role in virtually every other subject in the undergraduate curriculum in later years, particularly in criminal law, evidence, trusts, and family law. We therefore felt that skills acquired by learners in working on tort issues would substantially overlap with the skills required on other courses (including other first-year courses) and would, we hoped, be readily transferable to those courses as well as to later professional practice.

The subject of contract law, though it could offer similar advantages, seemed less suitable as it is much concerned with commercial abstractions, such as 'uberrimae fidei' (utmost good faith) contracts of insurance, bills of lading, void and voidable contracts, etc. Tort, on the other hand, arises from the accidents of everyday social interaction. From a psycholinguistic perspective, therefore, tort issues are more likely to fall within the existing schemata of our students and ourselves. As language teachers, we are then in a better position to address the linguistic objectives of the course without having to prepare the ground conceptually.

Finally, logistical considerations motivated the choice of tort rather than contract. It so happens that in the Department of Law at HKU two modes of teaching the law of contract are practised. There are thus effectively two courses, with half the students being allocated to each course. This arrangement was not therefore conducive to establishing the kind of 'common frame of reference' for our course, which was alluded to earlier. In contrast, the course in tort law would be designed by one lecturer (with a team of tutors) who was enthusiastic at the prospect of collaborative activity involving the new EC course. The final decision was therefore quite easily made.

Implications of content choices for course implementation

What are likely to be the practical implications of decisions about course content at the stage of course implementation? Will it still be possible for individual learners or groups of learners to renegotiate the question of content? The answer to this latter question is that theoretically, such re-negotiation would be consistent with our course goals, one of which states that the course will:

> 'provide practice ...in timely response to the felt needs of the students and subject teachers during the course'

In reality, however, some of the decisions made early on in the design process cannot be opened up for re-negotiation without substantial losses to efficiency, and ultimately it is the course designers and teachers who are accountable for the efficient use of resources. Teachers are likely, for example, to have spent considerable time before the course begins in familiarizing themselves with the general principles of tort law. Task frameworks or materials may have been developed, drawing on specific cases, statutes and legal problems. Teachers may also have been briefed by and paired with the Law Department tutors responsible for teaching the tort course. The choice of tort law, therefore, may be an instance where clear explanation rather than renegotiation will be appropriate when the course takes place.

The curricular framework, however, provides for substantial negotiation on specific content as the course takes place. The course designers take the view that on-going negotiation of particular cases, specific legal issues (as components of a single set `problem'), individual judgments rather than entire cases, sections of statutes, etc., will prove essential in ensuring active learner participation and effective learning outcomes. This will mean that teachers need to respond on a week by week basis to requests from learners (and from law tutors) to base activities and tasks around specific learner-selected content. Eventually, the course will be summatively evaluated, after which, if necessary, it will be practically possible for course designers to re-negotiate their original decisions, and in particular the decision to select tort law as content, in making plans for later versions of the course.

Conclusion

Although we retain the concerns over 'prescription' that first prompted us to write this paper, we have by now become more cautious about 'negotiation' in the context of curriculum design. We have taken stock of the evident fact that, in a preliminary course design stage, there will often be no learners available to negotiate a curriculum with in person. While it remains highly desirable to consult with existing students (taking the case of an EAP course in this university) to find out what they think a course for future students should be like and should seek to achieve, this is not the same as negotiating with future learners: things may look different by the end of a year, and when future decisions do not affect students personally. There may also be a period of some working months when existing first-year students are no longer available in their classes. During this stage, in the present case, any further 'negotiation' of goals and priorities has been handled internally within the course design team, in the light of findings from the needs analysis activities (and of limited additional consultations with two members of the Law Faculty). The learners' salient needs, as analysed and interpreted by the course designers, can be portrayed as guideposts that - in a related sense of the term - can help course planners 'negotiate' a way through a terrain that allows for different possible exploratory routes.

Whether an emerging philosophy in our Centre should in time be expressed as 'learning-centred' or 'learner-centred' is for us a matter of emphasis rather than controversy. We would like to emphasise strongly that concerns for learning and for learners are inseparable. A concern for learners as people must give prominence to their role and their (predictable and actual) expectations as learners in a class setting, and also to what others will expect of them in the wider educational and community contexts. Learners have a right to expect that the course they are

taking has recognisable and motivated purposes and procedures, while also proving responsive to their own learning interests and needs. On a short course in particular, negotiations over what is done, and how it is done, can be expected to take place within a framework of decisions that course designers have reached through efforts to synthesise the views and observations of staff and students and to determine what may be achieved within constraints of course duration and intensity. What appears essential to us is not that everything should be negotiable, but that it is made clear why a course is being taught, and taught in the way that it is, and what ongoing curricular choices will genuinely involve the learners. Maximizing these areas of choice is desirable from the perspective of commitments to promoting learner responsibility and participatory decision-making. Periodic reconsideration of the 'initial' course framework by course designers in the light of feedback from students and others is also an essential part of curriculum evaluation and renewal, and of accountability to all concerned groups.

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First words

Relax, Mummy ~
give me a break ~
I 'm only seven days conceived.
I don't want to stay up
marking scripts, writing papers.
Baby labour is inhuman ~
it's also against the law.
Human rights, legal sanctions aside,
just for selfish reasons, you should stop.
If now you keep me up,
Later, you'll suffer ~
nocturnal habits die hard.
It's never too early, the experts say,
to train a baby in pacific ways

Agnes Lam

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Beyond (F)utilitarianism: English *as* academic purpose

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Abstract

To avoid the criticism that English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is *futilitarian* - the content of courses may be pedagogically thin and it may operate as little more than a service industry to other disciplines - it may be useful to question the stress on English *for* academic communication (with its assumption that language can be a neutral medium through which meanings pass) and instead to develop a focus on English itself. This focus on English would challenge both the language/content divide and the political quietism of EAP by looking at the *worldliness* of English, at the ways in which English is embedded in social, cultural and political relationships.

Broadly speaking, there appear to be two main pedagogical challenges faced by courses in English for academic purposes (EAP). The first concerns the basic question of what EAP courses should be about and addresses the constant struggle to establish meaningful course content. While the relative specificity of EAP courses, their audience of tertiary students and the obvious need to provide 'academic' content, should elevate these courses from the trivialization of content common to many 'communicative' language classes (in which content becomes nothing more than material to provide motivation to communicate), the difficulties in finding appropriate substantive content nevertheless often lead to the potential problem of *futility*: the content has little pedagogical rationale beyond serving as a medium for language learning. The second challenge concerns the role of EAP courses as a form of service industry to their institution and addresses the growing criticism that much of EAP is conservative, assimilationist and dominated by an ideology of pragmatism. This pragmatist orientation runs the danger of constructing EAP classes round the principle of *utilitarianism*: education is understood in terms of actions and their supposed consequences without attempting to deal with personal, contextual or cultural relationships. Put together, these two challenges present the problem of *futilitarianism*. It seems to me that without addressing these two challenges, other concerns such as whether English courses are 'efficient', how they should be evaluated, or what role they should play relative to other disciplines, cannot be usefully discussed. This paper seeks to explore these two challenges and to suggest a potential way forward.

The difficulties raised by these two challenges seem to hinge on a number of basic beliefs in EAP. First is the commonly held view that English, or indeed any language, is merely a medium through which meanings are expressed, a channel through which ideas can pass back and forth unchanged. If, as I shall argue later, there are good reasons to question this assumption, the very idea of English *for* academic purposes, which rests on the belief that English is a neutral medium for achieving academic purposes, comes into question . Second, the related question of the divide between language and content needs to be explored. Once again, this view seems to suggest that language is a medium through which content passes, thus implying that we can conveniently focus either on language or on content. Third, there is the belief both within and outside EAP circles that EAP courses should be a form of service industry to other faculties. In this view, the role of EAP courses is simply to provide students with the tools to pursue their studies in

their own disciplines. And lastly, there is the problem of the general tendency towards political quietism in applied linguistics. By this I mean that there has long been a proclivity to view language teaching as an innocent and neutral process unconnected to the politics of education, culture or knowledge.

What I want to suggest here is that it may be possible to avoid the futilitarianism of much EAP by questioning the 'for' of English for academic purposes with its implications that English is but a medium that can serve certain purposes. In place of this functional view of English, I want to suggest a return to a focus on English itself - English *as* academic purpose. This focus on English, however, challenges both the language/content divide and the political quietism of EAP by looking at English from a critical stance that recognizes the ways in which English is embedded in social, cultural and political relations. By focusing critically on language we may be able to overcome both the difficulty in establishing meaningful and educationally useful content in our courses and the criticism that EAP courses tend to be assimilationist.

Contents and discontents

There are a number of problems with developing the actual content of so-called content-based classes. If the content is to be based on the disciplinary area in which the students study, there are three basic possibilities: first, the course is taught by a subject specialist with a special focus on problems faced by students studying in a second language. In many ways, this would seem the most desirable option at tertiary institutions in Hong Kong. Unfortunately, in the colonial context of the education system here, there appears to be a tendency to disregard the language problems faced by students and thus, although every university lecture or tutorial in English is in theory a content-based English class, students often find these lectures and tutorials of limited use in terms of language (and thus often content) learning. I still suspect that a better solution to the language difficulties faced by our students might be to offer far more help within their disciplines rather than to establish separate language centres. People with expertise in language education might be better employed helping subject teachers become more aware of language and language learning than teaching language as if it existed in some separate domain. The second possibility involves close cooperation between subject teachers and English teachers, so that assignments can be worked on together, lectures prepared together and so on. Such an approach, however, requires a great deal of cooperation between language centres and departments (for a discussion of some of the difficulties involved in even limited cooperation, see Leung and Hui, 1993), so without greater cooperation from other faculties this also becomes an unmanageable option. Thirdly, one can try to conduct semi-specialized courses within a language centre. The problem here, however, is that unless the teachers are in fact specialists in the discipline, they find themselves either teaching a course of rather vague generality (e.g. scientific English) or teaching a more specific course in which, as Spack (1988) has pointed out, they "find themselves in the uncomfortable position of being less knowledgeable than their students" (p.37).

A different approach to establishing academic course content involves the use not so much of specific, discipline-related material but rather of more general, theme- or issue-based materials. While this approach avoids some of the obstacles suggested above to discipline-based work and can also deal with the problem of students having varied disciplinary backgrounds, it runs into a number of other difficulties. Although such an approach is still based on the rationale that language is best learned while the focus is away from the medium, it becomes harder to give a pedagogical rationale for the content of many of these courses. Thus, although the object of the course is to teach academic English, there is a need to deal in educational terms with the reasons for and the effects of basing a course on "social issues" such as abortion, homosexuality, euthanasia and so on. One of the problems here is that on the one hand it is being argued that English is a medium for academic work and on the other that such content is a medium for learning English. We end up with two media, each supposedly a medium for the other. Thus, in order to teach English as a medium for academic purposes, issues and themes are discussed and written about as a means to promote the acquisition of that medium. But the focus of attention seems to be neither on the language nor on the pedagogical implications of the substantive content

introduced through the issues. The topics, although sometimes reasonably interesting, remain tangential both to students' lives and the pedagogical rationale for the courses. Finally, while teachers trying to use discipline-based materials may end up knowing less than their students, there is a similar problem with issue- or theme-based content in that language teachers set themselves up as informed knowers on a diverse range of topics. This may lead not only to rather shallow discussions and essays on the particular topics, but also, because teachers cannot be expected to be able to deal critically and comprehensively with such a broad range of topics, to an uncritical liberalism whereby topics are framed between overly simple dichotomies (Should prostitution be legalized? Is homosexuality normal? Should the death penalty be abolished? and so on)

If content-based approaches to EAP therefore present some interesting possibilities but also many problems, so too do the more rational, deductive language-based approaches. Although these have nearly always been intertwined with content-based courses (so that teachers of academic writing have frequently focused not only on content but also on various linguistic and organizational aspects of writing), they appear to have been growing in ascendancy more recently. From the rather general classifications of academic writing that had become a staple of academic writing classes, especially in North America, (e.g. essays that compare or contrast, describe, classify, show cause and effect, etc), work has now moved to more specific analysis of academic genres such as lab reports, case studies, legal documents, and so on (see Swales, 1990). While some have criticised this focus because it emphasizes discourse conventions rather than writing processes (e.g. Spack, 1988), other recent criticisms have raised serious concerns about the underlying pragmatist ideology of this approach and of EAP in general.

Following on from Santos' (1992) argument that ESL writing has remained strangely distanced from the ideological concerns that have recently been taken up in discussions of first language writing, Severino (1993) takes issue with Swales' (1990) claim that EAP can be considered in purely pragmatic terms. Rather, she suggests, it implies "an acculturative ideological stance - the desirability of assimilating quickly into academic, corporate and U.S. mainstream cultures" (p.182). Similarly, Benesch (1993) argues that there is a failure in EAP to question academic norms; instead they are presented as "positive artifacts of a normative academic culture into which ESL students should be assimilated" (p.710). Thus, the focus is always on changing the students in order to fit into the academic culture rather than trying to get the academic culture to adapt to the students. There is no questioning of the status quo and no questioning of the overall "accommodationist ideology that aims to assimilate ESL students uncritically into academic life" (p.714). Ultimately, she suggests, "the good intentions and hard work of EAP researchers may actually make life harder for both ESL faculty and students because of EAP's accommodation to traditional academic practices which limit the participation of nonnative-speaking students in academic culture" (p.713).

This criticism of the ideology of pragmatism in EAP does not just apply to genre-based approaches. Attempts to focus on either discipline-related content or on issues-based content run into the same difficulties. Discipline-based content, if taught by subject specialists, is not something the EAP teacher can greatly influence, and if taught by EAP teachers, is often something of which they only have a passing knowledge and thus are not able to explore critically. In both cases, the EAP course remains a form of language adjunct course that seeks to assimilate students unquestioningly into the broader academic culture. In the case of issues-based course content, there is clearly more scope for raising more critical questions, but to the extent that much of this work operates with an unclear pedagogical rationale - issues are introduced in order to facilitate language use rather than for some inherent educational purpose - it frequently fails to introduce any critical element to the course. And, as I have already suggested, framed as many issues-based courses are between a series of liberal dichotomies, they tend to reproduce a liberal approach to forms of knowledge and a conservative approach to language. Meanwhile, the pragmatic definition of EAP opens it up to further utilitarian pressures by demanding that courses be 'efficient' in terms of goals set not by those involved in language education but by faculties and other external bodies.

Yet there are convincing arguments why EAP courses should resist this pragmatist stance and develop a more critical approach. First, rather than apparently meeting the 'needs' of the students (as is often claimed after applying some form of 'needs analysis'), a pragmatist approach may do a pedagogical disservice to the students. A curricular focus on providing students only with academic-linguistic skills for dealing with academic work in other disciplines misses a crucial opportunity to help students to develop forms of linguistic, social and cultural criticism that would be of much greater benefit to them for understanding and questioning how language works both within and outside educational institutions. Second, by denying the political and ideological contexts of language education, a pragmatist stance adopts a conservative approach to education which at least needs to be acknowledged and justified, if not challenged. And third, this stance leads to a self-defeating position for EAP classes. If one of the difficulties we face in EAP is our marginalization and displacement into a secondary role compared to the other disciplines, this problem cannot be overcome by accepting a role as a service department providing what other departments feel they need.

There are, then, a number of concerns about EAP, concerns which might be characterised as 'futilitarianism'. The emphasis on English as a medium for content, opens up a divide whereby language is seen as a separate domain that can be taught in order that disciplines can use this neutral medium to construct their own meanings. EAP teachers are left either to teach courses that reproduce the language and content of subject areas or to find a pedagogical rationale for introducing various themes and issues into their classes. The frequent difficulties involved in trying to work cooperatively with other disciplines have led to the common option of a mixture of issues-based classes, in which the content is frequently a rather bland series of liberal "social issues". Alternatively, others have opted for more genre-based approaches, in which the relegation of all content to an acceptance of academic genres leads to an unquestioning assimilationist stance. The challenge, therefore, is how to develop a more critical form of EAP, one that would not see itself as a service industry to other departments or have as its goal the assimilation of students into academic culture, but rather one that would aim to challenge the students and the university in more critical fashion, a "dynamic" rather than a "passive" language centre in Shaw's (1993) terms.

Beyond language and content

In pursuing what this might mean, it is worth looking more sceptically at the language/content divide, which is central to many debates around the focus of EAP courses. This in turn I want to relate to another common (though less often explicitly discussed) division between 'rational' and 'natural' orientations in language learning, since a focus on the natural processes of language learning is frequently assumed to be linked to a focus on content, while a focus on rational processes is linked to a focus on language. In order to understand how these divisions have come about, I would like to take a step back to look at these arguments within the broader context of the history of English language teaching. At the end of his book *A History of English Language Teaching*, Howatt (1984) suggests that this history can be characterised by the interplay of two principal focuses. On the one hand, there has been the focus on 'natural' methods of acquisition, whereby learning a second language is seen as a process roughly akin to the natural processes of first language learning. The emphasis here has been on learning language through oral interaction, with conscious attention focused away from the medium itself and towards the meanings of the interaction. On the other hand, the 'rational' approach has focused conscious attention on the language itself, aiming to teach through formal learning of grammatical rules and lexical items. Kelly (1969) shows that natural, 'inductive' approaches to language teaching in Europe appear to have been at their strongest in classical times, during the Renaissance and in the late 19th and 20th centuries, while rational, 'deductive' approaches have dominated during Medieval and Enlightenment times. As both Kelly and Howatt point out, however, although one particular focus may be seen to predominate over the other at any specific time, they are frequently intertwined.

These two themes, though often intermingled, can clearly be seen in EAP, the natural orientation providing much of the rationale for content-based approaches, and the rational orientation providing a focus on language, especially in the recent emergence of genre-based

approaches. Natural approaches have dominated English language teaching in English-dominant[1] countries this century, from the Natural and Direct Methods at the turn of the century to the Natural Approach and communicative language teaching in more recent decades. Content-based teaching has emerged as a particular development of this orientation. Based on the idea that language can best be learned when attention is focused on learning content other than language through the medium of language, it has received some of its strongest support through work on the French Immersion programmes in Canada, which seek to teach French by immersing English-speaking students in French-medium subject classes.[2] Given that EAP is seen generally as a preparation for students before they enter their own disciplines, the arguments for such content-based approaches in EAP have seemed strong. Thus, Brinton, Snow and Wesche (1989) suggest that content-based English classes help match specific student needs (by relating the content to their disciplinary focus), improve motivation through relevance, use the prior knowledge of the students, provide real, contextualised and authentic language use, and focus on meaning rather than language.

What I want to suggest, however, is that it is worth questioning these two dichotomies (language/content and rational/natural), since they frame arguments about EAP in a very particular and perhaps unhelpful way. Both appear to be products of a certain way of thinking about language and learning that are now coming under considerable critical scrutiny from various quarters. The language/content divide with which we now operate appears to be a result of the attempt in structural linguistics to develop an analysis of language that could leave meaning out. Once the idea that one could focus on language structure without considering meaning was applied to language teaching, and once the division between the natural and the rational was linked to this, teaching language came to be seen as a process either of focusing consciously on language structures (be they syntactic or discoursal) or of focusing unconsciously on language by emphasizing other content. Missing in this formulation is the idea that language itself has meaning, that it is not simply a medium through which meanings based on some sense of objective reality or personal intention pass, that it may play a fundamental role in how we make sense of the world and the world makes sense of us.

In contrast to arguments in the sociolinguistic or neo-Whorfian mould, which attempt to relate linguistic structure and lexis to social strata or cultural forms, poststructural thinking on language has emphasized the need to understand language as already social and cultural. Thus, rather than trying to find correlations between language on the one hand and social or cultural structures on the other, this view demands that we consider language use to be a social practice, that we acknowledge that it is always/already social and cultural. Once language is seen as social practice, it cannot be isolated from its social, cultural and ideological contexts, so to write, speak, read, or listen can never be acts performed neutrally through some linguistic medium. Thus, in contrast to the humanist version of language, which emphasizes the centrality of human rationality in social relations and therefore considers language to be a medium through which rational, conscious subjects convey their meanings back and forth, this view suggests that meaning and ultimately subjectivity are produced through language, "that meaning is constituted within language and is not guaranteed by the subject which speaks it" (Weedon, 1987, p.22). It is through language, then, that we become subjects and it is through language that we battle to construct the world in different ways. "Once language is understood in terms of competing discourses, competing ways of giving meaning to the world, which imply differences in the organization of social power, then language becomes an important site of political struggle" (p.24). From this point of view, then, language is no longer a medium that can be separated from a notion of content but rather is a crucial site for investigation into how our lives are given (and denied) meaning through language.

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[1] I use the term 'English-dominant' in preference to 'English -speaking' in order to keep in mind the multilingual and multicultural realities of those countries that are often simply referred to as 'English-speaking countries' (Britain, USA, Australia etc)

[2] As Tsui (1992) has rightly pointed out, this model has been inappropriately applied to Hong Kong. Not only are there serious doubts about the real effectiveness of French Immersion classes, but their apparent success also needs to be seen in light of the way they have functioned as an elite stream for middle and upper middle class white Anglophone children. This immersion approach certainly cannot be simply applied to Hong Kong schools

This view of language seems to have at least four important implications. First, since it emphasizes the fundamental role language plays in shaping our lives, it helps us to deal with questions around language far more effectively than a view of language as a neutral medium. Second, it brings into question the divide between language and content since it sees meaning not as something guaranteed by an external world or a language-using subject but rather as something constituted by competing discourses in language. In this view there is no useful distinction to be made between language and meaning. Third, if this understanding of language brings into question our status as rational individuals in control over our meanings, the divide between the rational and the natural must surely also become questionable. Thus, the idea that there is a real distinction to be made between some rational, detached faculty of thinking on the one hand and some natural but unconscious focus on meaning on the other hand becomes far less tenable. Finally, if language indeed plays such a central role in constituting meaning and even creating subjectivity, and if the distinction between rational and natural approaches to learning starts to appear less tenable, then to teach language *for* academic purposes as if it were merely a medium to be acquired would seem to miss the opportunity to focus on the central aspects of language itself. What I want to suggest is that a critical focus on language that is concerned neither with a language/content divide nor a rational/natural divide may be a crucial direction for EAP courses.

Critical language awareness

The recent increase in interest in more rational-deductive approaches to language in EAP appears to be part of a more general swing back to focus on language in ELT after some of the excesses of the anti-rationalist dogmas of communicative, experiential and humanistic language learning. As Ivanic puts it, "the idea of learning about language has got back on the agenda under a new name: 'language awareness'" (1990, p.122). This general move towards language awareness has been criticised by Fairclough (1992), however, because of its liberal-interventionist orientation. The language awareness movement, especially as it has grown up in Britain, is based on a liberal understanding of both education and language. Educational 'failure' is seen as something that can be overcome by bridging the gap between home and school or between different educational environments; it does not concern itself with the causes of the problems. And, while a liberal view of language may at times celebrate certain forms of diversity, it tends nevertheless to stress the inappropriateness of difference and the importance of standard norms, a view which amounts to "dressing up inequality as diversity" (Fairclough, 1992, p.15). The parallels between this liberal-interventionist view of education and the dominant model for English enhancement programmes in Hong Kong is clear: they operate on the belief that a bit more of the same thing will solve the problems of the students and that students need to learn to conform to the standards and norms of academic writing.

What Fairclough and his colleagues propose is a *critical* version of language awareness, which in turn is part of the larger focus on critical language study and critical discourse analysis (see e.g. Fairclough 1989). Critical language study, according to Fairclough (1992), "highlights how language conventions and language practices are invested with power relations and ideological processes which people are often unaware of" (p.7). It takes mainstream language study to task for failing to question language practices and conventions and thus obscuring "their political and ideological investment" (ibid.). Based on this view of language, Fairclough then argues for the need for critical language awareness: "given that power relations work increasingly at an implicit level through language, and given that language practices are increasingly targets for intervention and control, a critical awareness of language is a prerequisite for effective citizenship, and a democratic entitlement" (p.12).

This approach to critical language awareness seems to offer a useful way forward from some of the difficulties I suggested in the last section. Certainly, it is an interesting response both to the challenge that much EAP is guilty of political conservativism and to the problem of the language/content divide. By focusing on language as social practice and by always relating language to its broader social and ideological contexts, critical language awareness can focus on

both language and content simultaneously (and thus questions the divide itself) and can develop analyses critical of both linguistic and social norms. Nevertheless, I have some concerns about adopting this form of critical language awareness. First, there is a frequent tendency to operate with what I see as a rather reductive view of social relations, whereby a "dominant group" (or groups) has "power" which is maintained by the ideological manipulation of society. Thus, Fairclough (1989) discusses ideology in terms of assumptions underlying practices which "can often be shown to originate in the dominant class or the dominant bloc" (p.33), and Ivanic (1990) suggests that "powerful social groups determine how things, and particularly people, should be described" (pp.125-6). I believe we need a more complex vision of social and ideological relations than one in which certain groups hold power over the oppressed through ideology. Following Foucault's "avowedly anti-Marxist" position, which "rejects the reduction of all power-relations to class-relations" (Harland, 1987, p.166), and suggests instead that power operates through all social relations (see, for example, Foucault, 1980), I prefer to maintain a focus on the political while avoiding the language of "oppressed", "oppressors", "domination" and "emancipation". In this view, there is no ultimate source of power and inequality (located, for example, in class and socio-economic relations); rather, there are a multiplicity of power relationships operating in and through discourse.

Second, there is a concomitant tendency to believe that critical linguists can unveil the truth hidden in and by language. The basic premise here is that ideological meanings that favour the powerful over the powerless lie hidden in texts and that the estimable goal of the critical linguist is to reveal these. Fairclough (1989), for example, makes a distinction between "inculcation" - "the mechanism of power-holders who wish to preserve their power" - and "communication" - "the mechanism of emancipation and the struggle against domination" (p.75). This belief that ideologies can be analyzed through their linguistic realization has to confront two awkward questions, however: how such truths and realities are arrived at outside the linguistic and ideological frames that govern our lives and, perhaps most importantly, what types of diverse readings of different texts may in fact be possible. Clark (1992) makes this point when, after taking up a similar view that "much of social meaning is not explicit", and that critical language awareness is needed as a process of "unveiling or demystifying", as "an instrument of analysis for uncovering what is implicit - the underlying ideological content" (p.121), she suggests that this approach is nevertheless "somewhat deterministic - is seems that if only readers have the linguistic tools at their disposal they can get at the 'true meaning' of the text" (ibid.). There is a danger in some versions of critical linguistics that they posit a true meaning or a reality to be uncovered, a position that suggests a problematic divide between ideology (false) and reality (true) and a belief that there is ultimately a 'wrong' (ideologically obscured) and a 'right' (ideologically revealed) reading of a text, rather than a focus on "how one meaning wins credibility or legitimacy over other available meanings" (Clark, 1992, p.122). Third, this seems to suggest that language is somehow a medium through which ideological meanings pass. In a more equitably structured world, in a world in which people listened more carefully to critical linguists and in which we could arrive at some purer form of "communication" rather than "inculcation", language might somehow become a more transparent and truthful medium. Thus, there appears to be a rather problematic view here of language as a potentially neutral medium. Finally, it is perhaps worth asking to what extent awareness of apparent oppression can lead to emancipation. Thus, if, as Fairclough (1992) suggests, critical language study sees itself as a "resource for developing the consciousness of particularly those people who are dominated in a linguistic way" (pp.9-10), we might still want to ask "whose consciousness?"

Nevertheless, this work in critical language awareness opens up some important directions for working critically with language. What I am interested in pursuing here is the idea that we can arrive at a focus for EAP courses that avoids the content/language divide, avoids the rather insipid liberal focus on "social issues", and avoids the pragmatic utilitarianism of genre-based approaches, and instead looks at language critically without falling into some of the pitfalls of critical language awareness. This, then, is not an approach to language that attempts to show its relationship to social and ideological forms, but rather a view of language that sees language as always "worldly" (see Pennycook, 1994). The point here is not to argue for the need to reveal conditions of oppression as they are realised in texts but rather to explore the "worldliness" of language, to look at language as always embedded in social, cultural, economic and political

relations. In this sense, the worldliness of English points not only to its global spread but also to how it both reflects and creates local social relations. Although this view of language as social action suggests that English is inseparable from the social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which it is used, it does not suggest that meanings in language are determined by macro relations of power. Rather, there is a space here for multiple readings of texts from different discursive positions and for the possibility of alternative meanings to be constructed through English.

The worldliness of Hong Kong English

In pursuing such a goal, it is worth considering these comments made by a first year student of mine about English in Hong Kong:

> Sometimes it comes to my mind that the compulsory learning of English in schools is one of the British government's political strategies.... By enforcing the compulsory education, more people in Hong Kong are ready to accept the British culture, customs and of course, the government policy. And if the majority of the English speakers in Hong Kong regard the language as superior to Chinese, it is reasonable or rational for them to support the government policy. In other words, the teaching of English is a kind of cultural intrusion in Hong Kong and may be regarded as a political weapon. Whenever I think about this, I will be very upset because all of the students are under the control of the Education Department which put too much stress on English. Students are just like the slaves of the Department because they follow and obey exactly what the examination requirement said.
>
> However, the above assumption does not affect my decision about taking the degree course of English. I love English simply because the language is fascinating. It is easy to learn English but difficult to master it well. Moreover, English is widely used in the world and because the territory is an international trade centre, many jobs require candidates possessing a good command of English. Therefore, I cannot deny that studying English can secure my future prospect. (Ma Wai Yin. 1993)

There are, I believe, a number of very interesting points in this statement. First, it strikes me that this student has a far more developed understanding of the role of English in Hong Kong than many people who claim expertise in this area. Second, she identifies English as "a political weapon" and a form of "cultural intrusion" in Hong Kong, thus suggesting that English cannot be separated from the colonial context in which it is used and that to learn and use English necessarily compromises her both politically and culturally. But third, she also acknowledges the importance of learning English, not just for pragmatic reasons but also out of a love for the language. There is a difficult ambivalence here, an anger at the cultural intrusion of English and its manipulation by a colonial government yet an affection for that same language and an acknowledgement of its importance in her life. Such ambivalences are by no means uncommon, for they can be found in many of the comments made about the postcolonial problematic of opposing the economies, political structures, cultures and languages of colonialism while at the same time doing so in and through a colonial language that has been part of one's social and educational life and which also allows access to a global audience.

In his essay 'Biggles, Mau Mau and I', for example, Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1993) recalls the "dance of contradictions" (p.138) he faced when he read and enjoyed Biggles' exciting escapades with the RAF, for it was this same RAF that was bombing the Mau Mau independence fighters in Kenya for whom his brother was fighting. Confronted for many years by the contradictions involved in writing in the language that was also the language of neocolonial oppression in Kenya, Ngugi eventually vowed to give up writing in English and to write first in Gikuyu. Other writers

have not had, or have not chosen to adopt, such an option and have continued to live with these contradictions. In his autobiographical work *Beyond a Boundary*, the Caribbean writer and political activist C.L.R. James (1963) recalls his love of the nineteenth century British novelist Thackeray and cricket during his school years. Although he later came to understand "the limitation on spirit, vision and self-respect which was imposed on us by the fact that our masters, our curriculum, our code of morals, *everything* began from the basis that Britain was the source of all light and leading, and our business was to admire, wonder, imitate, learn" (pp.38-9), he still acknowledges his "inexhaustible passion" for cricket and English literature (p.43). The Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe, amongst many others, has also wrestled with these contradictions, making a plea that

> Those of us who have inherited the English language may not be in a position to appreciate the value of the inheritance. Or we may go on resenting it because it came as part of a package deal which included many other items of doubtful value and the positive atrocity of racial arrogance and prejudice which may yet set the world on fire. But let us not in rejecting the evil throw out the good with it. (Achebe, 1975, p.219)

What emerges from these comments is a deep sense of ambivalence. A difficulty in trying to write in a postcolonial world in the language of colonialism and neocolonialism. It is this same sense of ambivalence that seems to emerge so clearly from my student's comments about English and it is this sense of anger and frustration at English coupled with feelings sometimes of real affection for the language and sometimes simply of pragmatic acceptance that many Hong Kong students seem to feel. It is this sense of contradiction, along with many other issues around the social, cultural and political contexts of English in Hong Kong that I think we need to start to address.

One of the difficulties in dealing with the implications of the statement by my student lies in the concept of mastery of English. Searle (1983) makes this point well when he suggests that "when we talk of 'mastery' of the Standard language, we must be conscious of the terrible irony of the word, that the English language itself was the language of the master, the carrier of his arrogance and brutality." English, Searle suggests "has been a monumental force and institution of oppression and rabid exploitation throughout 400 years of imperialist history....It was made to scorn the languages it sought to replace, and told the colonised peoples that mimicry of its primacy among languages was a necessary badge of their social mobility as well as their continued humiliation and subjection". The challenge for us as teachers, Searle argues, is "to grasp that same language and give it a new content, to de-colonise its words, to de-mystify its meaning,...to rip out its class assumptions, its racism and appalling degradation of women, to make it truly *common*, to recreate it as a weapon for the freedom and understanding of our people" (p.68).

Conclusion

What I want to suggest here, then, is that first of all as language teachers we cannot treat English as if it were some neutral medium through which academic meanings can be encouraged to pass. Rather, it is a language, in the context of Hong Kong, already full of colonial, racial, class and gendered assumptions. While some of these meanings may adhere to particular words and phrases in the language, it is more in the worldliness of the language, in its use as a "political weapon" and as a form of "cultural intrusion" that its meanings adhere. The challenge, then, is on the one hand to address the ambivalence that many of our students feel, trapped between a language that they resent and a language that they need and may even like, and on the other to explore what it might mean to "de-colonise its words". If my notion of worldliness suggests that language cannot be separated from its contexts, it is not intended to imply that it is determined by them. That is to say, the process of decolonising English cannot be left to happen as a presumed result of the political decolonisation of Hong Kong. Rather, it is a process that we as English teachers need to pursue separately, for the decolonisation of English may well be a process on which decolonizations in other spheres will depend.

By focusing on the worldliness of English in Hong Kong, work in EAP can avoid the criticisms that it is shallow in content and conservative in practice. Although I by no means want to propose this as a sole EAP focus, I do think that this form of language awareness may be crucial in helping our students to deal with English. This is not a form of language awareness that makes linguistic forms or genres its principal focus of study, nor is it a form of critical language awareness that attempts to uncover ideological forms embedded in texts. Rather, it is a form of language awareness that aims to investigate students' understandings of language, to explore the ambivalent feelings that students often have towards the language, to develop ways of looking at English in Hong Kong that examine its relationships to colonialism, gender and socioeconomic status. Such a focus on English, I believe, can help overcome the futilitarianism that bedevils much of EAP at present.

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First Draft

My Life is a first
draft printed on paper once
used for other drafts

Agnes Lam

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On the psychological plausibility of 'topic' as a construct in research on writing

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Abstract

This paper describes an empirical investigation into the salience of sentence 'topic' in written discourse. Training second language writers to identify sentence topics in drafts of their written work has been proposed as a central means of helping writers achieve greater coherence. The point of departure for this study is the notion that 'topic' is a psychological rather than a linguistic concept, and that its employment in various forms of pedagogical intervention is therefore likely to be problematic. In this study, twenty-four native speakers and forty second language speakers of English were asked to identify the sentence topics in a scientific report. The study showed that the notion of 'topic' was indeed problematic for both native speakers and non-native speakers. Of particular interest, both from the perspective of discourse analysis and also in terms of pedagogical intervention is why certain sentences were more problematic than others. The implications of the study are presented and discussed.

Background

The concept of discourse coherence has fascinated discourse analysts and language educators, particularly those working with foreign language students in tertiary contexts, for a number of years now. Discourse analysts inquire into what it is that constitutes coherent discourse. What is it, in other words, that distinguishes a text which is perceived by the listener or reader as 'hanging together', from a random collection of sentences? Language educators, on the other hand, are more concerned with the practical question of helping students produce coherent discourse.

This particular area of research lies in the rather ill-defined terrain that borders the disciplines of linguistics, psycholinguistics, applied linguistics and cognitive psychology. In fact, a review of the literature had been expected to turn up references to the psychological salience of discourse topic in the cognitive psychology literature, but this proved not to be the case. There may well be studies, but I was unable to uncover any that were directly relevant. In any case, such studies on discourse processing as do exist within the cognitive psychology literature are of limited relevance because they almost invariably use artificially constructed "texts", and propositional analysis (see, for example, Garrod et al. 1994).

A debate which is currently preoccupying applied linguists concerns the extent to which discourse coherence resides within the reader/listener or the text. This debate goes back at least as far as 1976 when Halliday and Hasan produced their widely cited text *Cohesion in English*. In this

work, Halliday and Hasan argue that coherence in written texts is created by various cohesive devices. They would argue that in the following texts, for instance, coherence is created by the anaphoric reference item 'it'.

"The weather turned bitterly cold last Saturday. It also turned extremely wet."

"The weather turned bitterly cold last Saturday. Unfortunately, it was the day of the annual church picnic."

The notion that cohesion 'creates' coherence has been widely contested in the literature. Widdowson (1978), for instance, presented samples of discourse which, while they are readily perceived as coherent, do not contain any cohesive devices whatsoever. While the examples are attenuated and artificial, they serve to make the logical point that, while natural texts might contain cohesive devices of one sort or another, such devices do not create coherence. Hasan subsequently proposed the notion of cohesive 'harmony', arguing that discourse coherence is associated not with isolated elements, but with cohesive 'chains' which draw textual elements together.

A lucid recent account of the contribution of cohesion to coherence is provided in Hoey (1991). Hoey poses three questions:

1. How does the presence of cohesion contribute to the coherence of a text?
2. How does the presence of cohesion affect the ways in which sentences are perceived to be related to each other as complete propositions?
3. Does cohesion contribute to creating the larger organization of a text (if such exists)?

Hoey addresses his questions by reviewing the literature which demonstrates that coherence is not synonymous with cohesion. He concludes his review by claiming that cohesion is a property of the text, while coherence is a facet of a reader's (and, presumably, in the case of aural texts, a listener's) evaluation of a text. Notwithstanding this, he argues that cohesion does contribute to a text's organisation, and therefore to the perception of coherence in text.

Lautamatti (1990) agrees that cohesion is an epiphenomenon of coherent discourse, and suggests that perceptions of coherence are conditioned by the ongoing topic of the discourse. She distinguishes between interactional coherence and propositional coherence, and argues that the extent to which propositions are overtly marked by cohesive devices will depend on interpersonal factors such as the degree of intimacy of the interlocutors, the extent of shared knowledge and so on. Her article is interesting because it demonstrates the inextricable links between various elements and levels within discourse, including formal cohesion, discourse topics, propositional knowledge, and contextual factors such as interlocutor relationships. It is the task of the discourse analyst to tease out these relationships, and to identify the relative contributions each makes to the processing and production of coherent discourse.

van Dijk (1977) attempts to formalise the notion of 'topic', linking it to propositional logic. However, Brown and Yule (1983) take issue with van Dijk's presentation of discourse topic, pointing out that the concept itself is problematic.

> What must be of concern to linguists interested in notions such as 'discourse topic' is the fact that the formal means of identifying the topic for a piece of discourse claimed by van Dijk is, in fact, an illusion. Neither the topic representation nor the semantic representation of the whole text derive from anything more formal than the analyst's interpretation of what the text means. To produce the discourse topic, van Dijk does nothing more than what schoolchildren are frequently asked to do by their English teacher - produce a single sentence summary for the text under consideration. As any English

> teacher knows, this exercise is considerably easier with some passages (simple descriptive or narrative) than others (discursive or explanatory prose) and it inevitably produces a variety of different, though certainly related, interpretations of what must be included in the single 'topic' sentence. (Brown and Yule 1983, p.110)

Turning to pedagogy, several writing specialists (Lautamatti, 1978; Witte, 1983a, 1983b; Connor & Farmer, 1990) have suggested that topical structure analysis is a promising technique for improving the coherence of written work. Lautamatti (1978) develops a technique for analysing writing in terms of the relationship between the discourse topic and the sentence topics which make up a text. She argues that texts can be developed in three different ways, and that these ways are evident in the distribution of topics in succeeding sentences in a text. The first of these is through *parallel progression*, in which the topics of succeeding sentences in a text are semantically identical. The second is *sequential progression*. Here the topic of each succeeding sentence is different. In *extended parallel progression*, there is a return to a topic which has already been instantiated in an earlier sentence. Examples of each of these types of progression are set out in table 1.

Table 1: Types of sentence progression identified by Lautamatti

Parallel progression
The ability to carry electricity varies according to the extent to which substances contain electrons which are free to move. It is not something possessed by all substances.

1. The ability to carry electricity
2. It

Sequential progression
The ability to carry electricity varies according to the extent to which substances contain electrons which are free to move. Some substances contain few such molecules, and are therefore poor conductors.

1. The ability to carry electricity
2. Some substances

Extended parallel progression
The ability to carry electricity varies according to the extent to which substances contain electrons which are free to move. Some substances contain few such molecules, and are therefore poor conductors. This ability has been closely studied by physicis' n recent years.

1. The ability to carry electricity
2. Some substances
3. This ability

Several empirical investigations have been conducted into the use of topical structure analysis in teaching writing to second language speakers. Witte (1983a; 1983b) used the concept as a tool to investigate the revision process, and also as a device for studying perceptions of the quality of students' writing.

More recently, Connor and Farmer (1990, pp.126-139)) have reported on their experiences in using topical structure analysis as a revision tool for ESL students in intermediate and advanced-level college writing classes. Students are taken through the steps involved in

identifying topics and producing topical structure diagrams. They then apply the techniques to their own writing, usually after the production of a first draft.

Connor and Farmer report success with the technique, although the data here are anecdotal. (Their paper is a report on a pedagogical innovation, not a presentation of the outcomes of a piece of empirical research.) They report that:

> Student response has been positive; many have remarked that the procedure helps them to examine the meanings of their sentences and forces them to relate these meanings to the main topic and purpose of their writing. When we teach the analysis as a revision tool, we note improvement in student writing, specifically in regard to clearer focus (thanks to added extended parallel progression) and better development of subtopics (thanks to improved ratio of parallel and sequential progressions). (Connor and Farmer 1990, p.134).

In a preliminary investigation into the resources drawn upon by second language writers in transforming propositional content into coherent discourse, Nunan (1994) presented a group of second language writers in an EAP programme with a set of atomistic propositions derived from a science report. Among other things, he found a great deal of diversity in the topical structure patterns which emerged from the students' writing.

Although the studies and reports reviewed here are interesting and valuable in their own right, they leave some questions unanswered, and raise several more. Implicit in the Connor and Farmer report, for example, is the notion that there is some ideal ratio of parallel and sequential progressions. Such assumptions are, I believe, highly problematic. Also problematic is the assumption that sentence topics can be readily identified within written discourse, that they are, in fact, properties of the text, in much the same way as formal cohesion is a property of text. It is this particular notion that I should like to contest. The point of departure for the study reported here is the assertion that 'topic' is a psychological construct rather than a linguistic concept, and, as such, resides within the creator / processor of the text, rather than within the text itself.

Another area of research which is relevant to the study described below is that which addresses the question of whether learning a second language is like learning a first. The great bulk of this research, however, focuses on issues of peripheral interest here such as whether items of morphosyntax in a given language area acquired in the same order by first and second language learners. In terms of discourse processing, relatively little work has been done. In the early eighties, Nunan (1984) investigated similarities and differences in the discourse processing operations of first and second language learners. He found that in relation to the acquisition of cohesion, the similarities outweighed the differences. One of the interesting outcomes of this study was that there was an interaction between the experiential content knowledge of both first and second language speakers and their control of various forms of cohesion, particularly cohesive conjunction. Given the paucity of research into the processing of discourse by first and second language speakers, it was decided to build a comparative dimension into the study of the perception of sentence topics in written discourse.

The Study

Questions

From the review of the literature, it would seem that 'topic' is potentially a useful concept both for applied linguistic analysis, and also for pedagogical intervention. However, as I have argued above, the assumption that 'topic' is an unproblematic notion is one which should not go uncontested. The purpose of this study is therefore to explore the psychological salience of 'topic' in a comparative study involving both first and second language speakers.

The study was set up to explore the following questions which emerge from the above review of the relevant literature:

- How salient are sentence topics in written discourse?
- Are there discernible differences between native and non-native speakers of English in the identification of sentence topics in written discourse?

Subjects

Subjects were twenty-four native speakers of English who were undertaking a postgraduate degree in Applied Linguistics in the United States, and forty undergraduate speakers of English as a foreign language in Hong Kong.

Procedure

The purpose of the study was explained to subjects during the course of one of their regularly scheduled class meetings. Approval to carry out the study and report the results was sought and obtained. Subjects were then provided with the following set of instructions, which were explained to them. Any questions or points of clarification were dealt with, and subjects were then given as much time as they needed to complete the task.

Table 2: Instructions and text passage for study

Thank you for taking the time to complete this task. The aim of the task is to investigate whether readers of English have difficulty in identifying sentence topics in scientific discourse. **Instructions:** Please read the following text. After you have read the text, please look at the list of phrases which appears below the text and circle the phrase that represents the topic of each sentence in the text. [The topic is simply what the sentence is about. For example, in the sentence: "In the late 1960s, school desegregation in the southern United States became a fact of life", the topic is 'school desegregation'.]

TEXT As far as the ability to carry electricity is concerned, we can place most substances into one of two groups. The first group consists of materials with many electrons that are free to move. These materials are called conductors because they readily carry or conduct electric currents. Conductors are mostly metals but also include graphite. The second group consists of materials with very few electrons that are free to move. These materials are called non-conductors and are very poor conductors of electricity. Non-conductors can prevent electricity from going where it is not wanted. Hence they are also called insulators. Some common insulators are glass, rubber, plastic and air. There are a few materials, such as germanium and silicon, called semiconductors. Their ability to conduct electricity is intermediate between conductors and insulators. Semiconductors have played an important role in modern electronics.

Sentence	Possible sentence topics (please circle the phrase that you think represents the sentence topic)
1.	the ability to carry electricity / we / most substances / one of two groups
2.	the first group / materials / electrons
3.	these materials / conductors / they / electric currents
4.	conductors / metals / graphite.
5.	the second group / materials / electrons
6.	these materials / non-conductors / conductors / electricity.
7.	non-conductors / electricity / it
8.	they / insulators.
9.	common insulators / glass / rubber / plastic / air
10.	a few materials / germanium / silicon / semiconductors.
11.	their ability / electricity / conductors / insulators
12.	semiconductors / an important role / modern electronics

Are you a native speaker of English? yes / no

Results for both groups were tabulated. These are set out and discussed in the following section.

Results

Table 3, below sets out the tabulated results for both the native speaking (NS) and non-native speaking (NNS) subjects.

Table 3: Tabulated responses from NS and NNS groups

POTENTIAL TOPIC	NS	NNS
Sentence 1		
the ability to carry electricity	12	31
we	3	1
most substances	5	1
one of two groups	4	7
Sentence 2		
the first group	22	28
materials	0	2
electrons	2	9
Sentence 3		
these materials	11	4
conductors	12	34
they	0	0
electric currents	1	2
Sentence 4		
conductors	21	23
metals	2	9
graphite	1	8
Sentence 5		
the second group	22	33
materials	2	3
electrons	0	4

Sentence 6		
these materials	8	3
non-conductors	16	35
conductors	0	0
electricity	0	2
Sentence 7		
non-conductors	24	29
electricity	0	10
it	0	1
Sentence 8		
they	8	5
insulators	16	35
Sentence 9		
common insulators	24	40
glass	0	0
rubber	0	0
plastic	0	0
air	0	0
Sentence 10		
a few materials	17	7
germanium	0	0
silicon	0	0
semiconductors	7	33
Sentence 11		
their ability	24	36
electricity	0	4
conductors	0	0
insulators	0	0
Sentence 12		
semiconductors	21	18
an important role	3	12
modern electronics	0	10

While there is a greater degree of variation among the second language speakers, the majority decision of the group on which was the topic of the sentence coincided with the native speaker group in all instances except for sentence 10. I shall comment briefly on each sentence, discussing what I see as the most significant outcomes.

Sentence 1: *As far as the ability to carry electricity is concerned, we can place most substances into one of two groups.*

A majority of subjects in both groups identified 'the ability to carry electricity' as the topic sentence, although there was some variation between the NS and NNS groups. Interestingly, there was greater homogeneity within the NNS group, with 80 per cent selecting 'the ability to carry electricity'. For the NS group, half of the subjects selected one of the other three options. Rather than concluding that the NNSs were better able to identify the topic of the sentence than the NS, it may be that the NNS were following a 'select the first NP' strategy (but see Sentence 2). This would suggest that a possible difference between the two groups is a greater degree of flexibility on the part of the NS in identifying a preferred topic.

Sentence 2: *The first group consists of materials with many electrons that are free to move.*

'The first group' is strongly endorsed as the preferred sentence topic by both groups, although around 25% of the NNS group opted for 'electrons'. This reversal of the outcome which obtained in relation to S1, indicates that the rather appealing suggestion that NNS were operating with a 'select the initial NP' strategy is over-simplistic and rather naive. An alternative explanation for the outcome in relation to S1 is that the variation in both groups has to do with the fact that the topic is located outside the main clause.

Sentence 3: *These materials are called conductors because they readily carry or conduct electric currents.*

The NS group are almost evenly divided with almost half of the group identifying 'these materials' as the preferred topic, and the other half opting for 'conductors'. The great majority of the NNS subjects chose 'conductors'. The split in the NS group can probably be accounted for in terms of the appositional nature of the sentence wherein 'these materials' and 'conductors' serve as synonyms within the sentence. There is evidence in other parts of the analysis to suggest that this is a reasonable interpretation, as the split exists in all of the sentences containing relational clauses (for a description and explanation of clause types, see Halliday, 1985). The strong preference of the NNS group for 'conductors' shows that definite reference rather than indefinite superordinate terms are more salient to them. Within this text 'materials' acts as a 'general noun' (Halliday and Hasan, 1976), and there is some evidence here that such items may be problematic for even relatively advanced learners.

Sentence 4: *Conductors are mostly metals but also include graphite.*

Almost all of the NS group identified 'conductors' as the topic of sentence 4. There was greater variation in the NNS group. While just half of the subjects selected 'conductors', twenty per cent opted for 'metals', and, surprisingly, another twenty per cent identified 'graphite' as the topic of the sentence. It is not immediately apparent why this was so. Those subjects selecting 'graphite' obviously failed to identify the fact that graphite is an additive element within the sentence, a fact that is explicitly signalled by 'also'.

Sentence 5: *The second group consists of materials with very few electrons that are free to move.*

Neither group had much difficulty in identifying 'the second group' as the preferred topic of sentence five, although just under twenty per cent of the NNS group selected either 'materials' or 'electrons' as the topic of the sentence. The selection of 'materials' is consistent with the hypothesis that when the two key noun phrases in a sentence refer to the same thing, confusion will result.

Sentence 6: *These materials are called non-conductors and are very poor conductors of electricity.*

This sentence parallels sentence 3, and not surprisingly, similar results were obtained, with the NS group split between 'these materials' and 'non-conductors', presumably because of their synonymity within the sentence. The NNS group opted strongly for 'non-conductors', as they did for 'conductors' in sentence 3. This corroborates the conclusion drawn there that 'general' nouns such as 'materials' may well prove problematic in the processing of written discourse.

Sentence 7: *Non-conductors can prevent electricity from going where it is not wanted.*

This sentence provides one instance in which the NS group voted unanimously for a particular item, 'non-conductors'. The non-relational nature of the clause here seems to have lowered the ambiguity for the NS group. While this was the preferred choice for the NNS group as well, twenty-five per cent also selected 'electricity'.

Sentence 8: *Hence they are also called insulators.*

Here is another example where a relational clause, in which the two NPs in the clause are synonymous, has caused a split between the NS subjects with thirty-three per cent selecting the pro-form 'they' (which also acts as the ideational theme of the sentence). There was greater agreement amongst the NNS group that 'insulators' is the topic of the sentence.

Sentence 9: *Some common insulators are glass, rubber, plastic and air.*

This was the only sentence in which there was complete agreement, both within and across groups. All readers agreed that 'some common insulators' is the topic of the sentence, and that the list of items is intended to exemplify common insulators. One could hypothesise from this that exemplification is a relatively unproblematic function for NNS. The exemplification is made clear by the provision of several examples. (It would be interesting to see whether there were less consensus if the sentences had contained only a single example, as in the relational clause 'One common insulator is glass'.)

Sentence 10: *There are a few materials, such as germanium and silicon, called semiconductors.*

The results in relation to this sentence are interesting, because there is a reversal between the NS and NNS. Most of the NS identified 'a few materials' as the sentence topic, whereas the great majority of the NNS identified 'semiconductors'. The items 'germanium' and 'silicon' which are marked as exemplification by 'such as' were clearly identified as such by both groups. There is further evidence here of a rejection by the NNS of the 'general' noun in favour of the specific item.

Sentence 11: *Their ability to conduct electricity is intermediate between conductors and insulators.*

This sentence was also relatively unproblematic. There was unanimous agreement on the part of the NS group, and near-consensus across both groups on 'their ability' as the sentence topic.

Sentence 12: *Semiconductors have played an important role in modern electronics.*

In the final sentence, most of the NS identified 'semiconductors' as the sentence topic. While this was the preferred choice for almost half of the NNS group, around 25% selected 'an important role' and another 25% opted for 'modern electronics'.

We can summarise the foregoing discussion by suggesting that the following factors appeared to have an effect on topical sentence identification by both NS and NNS subjects, although the effect was not the same on both groups:

i. Subordination: The existence of topicalised information within a subordinate clause resulted in a greater spread of subject selection on the part of NNS.

ii. Thematisation: When the theme and grammatical subject were identical, there was greater agreement on the preferred topic than when theme and subject differed.

iii. Clause type: Relational clauses in which two different NPs within the sentence referred to the same entity resulted in a lower levels of consensus, particularly amongst the NS group.

iv. Function: Certain types of function, most obviously exemplification in these data, were readily perceived as peripheral to the main topic, and were therefore not preferred as the topic by either group.

v. Referring expression: When an entity was named, as well as being referred to by a general noun and a demonstrative (two cohesive devices designed to enable the writer to maintain thematic unity from one sentence to the next), NNS opted strongly for the definite reference. For NS, the opposite was the case. This may well indicate that for even relatively advanced NNS, control of cohesion may be more problematic than is commonly thought. (There is a substantial literature which demonstrates that both NS and NNS

children have difficulty with certain aspects of cohesion well beyond the primary age level. For a review, see Nunan 1984.)

Discussion

This study was carried out in order to explore the view that 'topic' is a psychological construct rather than a linguistic concept, and, as such, resides within the creator / processor of the text, rather than within the text itself. The results, I believe, are interesting, because they demonstrate that things are much more complex than this. There are instances in which the status of a particular noun phrase clearly emerges as the topic of a sentence, even though there are several other potential competitors within the sentence itself (sentences 7, 9 and 12 for the NS group). Interestingly, the same could not be said of the NNS group. In other instances, there is a great deal of divergence, suggesting that a reader-based factor, such as background knowledge is implicated in the choice of preferred topic. In some respects, lack of consensus can be attributed to linguistic factors such as the appositional nature of a given sentence, where two competing NPs are synonyms.

The results of this study contribute to the ongoing debate on the relative contributions of linguistic and non-linguistic factors to the coherence of spoken and written discourse. It may well be that the very existence of a debate indicates a certain immaturity in this aspect of applied linguistics. I believe that arguments over whether the processing and production of coherent discourse is essentially a linguistic or a psychological issue are not helpful. This study bears out the fact that it is not simply a matter of allocating contributing factors to either linguistic or non-linguistic dimensions of discourse processing and production. Rather it is the interaction of these factors which determines successful communication. Such a view articulates with one of the outcomes of the Nunan (1994) study, namely, that so called linguistic factors (such as referential cohesion and conjunction) are utilised by writers with different levels of success according to the extent to which the writer has command of the experiential content (a so-called psychological factor).

One response to the problematic nature of the construct 'topic' would be to abandon it altogether for a concept that can be defined in linguistic terms (although, I would argue that at a certain point the linguistic / psychological / psycholinguistic distinction begins to break down). An alternative concept for researchers to embrace would be 'theme', which Halliday (1985) has defined as the 'point of departure' for the sentence - in other words, its left-most constituent. Interestingly, Halliday also describes theme as the 'psychological subject' of the sentence. For those of us who are interested in discourse coherence this is fine as long as one is dealing with sentences in which the theme or 'psychological subject' coincide with the grammatical subject; as, is indeed the case, with most of the sentences in the test passage. However, 'theme' becomes problematic in cases where the theme and the grammatical subject diverge. It is particularly problematic when the left-most element of the sentence is an adverbial group or prepositional phrase, as is the case in the following examples from Halliday (1985, p.39):

THEME	RHEME
1. once	I was a real turtle
2. very carefully	she put him back on his feet again
3. on Friday night	I go backwards to bed

In the above sentences, it cannot be said that sentence 1 is about 'once', that sentence 2 is about 'very carefully', or that sentence 3 is about 'on Friday night'.

I believe that one of the problems with research conducted to date is that researchers have attempted to identify topics within particular strings (usually NPs) within the discourse. However,

in some cases what the sentence is 'about' is captured in a paraphrase rather than a direct extract from the discourse. This is illustrated in the following text.

Text 3

Evaluation is a major component of the educational environment. In this context, evaluation is an integral, constant component. From the very first day of class, teachers and students evaluate one another. This evaluation is not only of end products, but is also present during the entire learning process. As students we evaluate the teacher. This process involves judging the teacher's appearance, teaching methods, discipline procedures, and fairness in testing and grading. In fact, almost everything about the teacher is evaluated by students. As teachers, we evaluate almost every aspect of our students. We examine critically their intellectual, social, and personal characteristics. This evaluation on the part of students and teachers occurs throughout the educational environment, outside the classroom as well as inside it.

From the topical structure diagram, which is set out as Table 4, we can see that in some instances the topic can be lifted directly from the text, but in other instances, a more accurate reflection of what a particular sentence is about is obtained through a paraphrase. I believe that in future research we ought to embrace the notion of paraphrase, where appropriate, rather than restricting sentential topics only to the words and phrases actually existing within the sentences which constitute the discourse.

Table 4: Topical structure diagram for evaluation text (Text 3)

SENTENCE	TOPIC				
	1	2	3	4	5
1	evaluation				
2	evaluation				
3		teacher and student evaluation			
4		teacher and student evaluation			
5			student evaluation		
6			student evaluation		
7				everything about the teacher	
8					teacher evaluation
9					teacher evaluation
10		teacher and student evaluation			

In terms of further research, it would be interesting to look at the contribution to the perception of sentence topic afforded by the discourse itself. This could be readily tested by replicating the study reported here, presenting the text in two conditions:]

Condition 1: as a coherent piece of discourse
Condition 2: as a collection of sentences which have been randomised.

Such a study would enable us to determine the effect that the placement of sentences within discourse may have on the perception of coherence, and specifically on the identification of topics in sentences.

Conclusion

In this paper I have set out to report on an investigation into the salience of 'topic' as a construct in discourse oriented applied linguistic research. Data were collected from two groups of subjects, a first language group and a second language group, who were asked to identify the topic of each sentence in a piece of connected discourse. Results indicated that it is simplistic to refer to constructs such as 'topic' as either belonging to the category 'linguistic construct' or 'psychological construct'. While the construct is essentially psychological, the extent to which both groups reached consensus on individual topics within individual sentences was very much determined by linguistic features of the sentences themselves and the discourse within which they reside.

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A Brief Critique of Chomsky's Challenge to Classical Phonemic Phonology

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Abstract

This article argues for the different purposes for which phonemic analysis and generative phonology were developed: the former a practical tool for describing the relationship between the sounds of a language and its meaning, the latter a theoretical construct to explain how the sound system of a language operates. It will start with a brief look at the background to generative phonology. Chomsky's arguments against phonemic phonology will then be examined and his criticisms will be evaluated in light of the theoretical underpinnings of both the segment-based and generative approaches, and it will be concluded that classical phonemics has been unjustly criticised.

Introduction

The study of phonology is language-specific and it is concerned with syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations in a given language. In other words, it tries to establish systematic relations between distinct sound units which are linguistically significant. Phonetics can therefore be viewed as the physical aspect of phonology. The other aspect of it is psychological in the sense that we produce speech sounds which are physically continuous and yet we seem to PERCEIVE them as a sequence of discrete items (Wilkins, 1972; Anderson, 1985; Ohala, 1986). As Schane (1973, p.4) remarks, the discrepancy between the physical and continuous and the perceptual and discrete is what fuels the philosophical debate about appearance and reality. This critique is in part motivated by such a debate, and by the central question of the motivation for and subsequent application of a particular approach.

The Advent of Generative Phonology

The question of representations and the resulting quest for theories of them seem to be the dominant preoccupation of modern phonology (Anderson 1985, p.9). From the late 19th century up to the Chomskyan revolution, the phoneme as a unit of representations was regarded as a fundamental concept in phonology. With the advent of generative phonology spearheaded by Chomsky and Halle (1968), the phoneme was practically discarded for "a relatively abstract or morphophonemic underlying level of phonological representation from which the phonetic output could be derived by application of a set of phonological rules" (Clark and Yallop 1990, p.154). Chomsky (1964) asserts that description of the sound pattern of a language should not be based on "analytic procedures of segmentation and classification" (p.95) and therefore, criticises classical phonemics' concern with taxonomy, contrast, distribution and biuniqueness.

Chomsky's Characterisation of the Phoneme and its Constraints

Chomsky (1964) argues that the four constraints; namely, BIUNIQUENESS, LINEARITY, INVARIANCE and LOCAL DETERMINACY invoked by the phonemic approach

render phonological representation impossible. Phonemes consist of allophones which do not contrast with one another. These allophones are realisations of the phonemes in actual speech. The phoneme /t/ has an aspirated version as its allophone but whether one says the word stop with the /t/ aspirated or not does not bring forth a change in meaning though the difference is what characterises native control of a language. In phonemic phonology, the use of these allophones are governed by rules about distribution which state, for example, that the allophone [t^{h}] is to be realised when /t/ is initial and [t^{n}] when it is followed by a nasal consonant. As Jones (1950, p.11) puts it, every phone is to be assigned to some phoneme as an allophone of it and "it is to be taken as axiomatic that one sound cannot belong to two phonemes of a language."

Chomsky (1964, p.72) states this biuniqueness constraint as "each sequence of phones is represented by a unique sequence of phonemes" and vice versa. In other words, the biuniqueness condition requires an unambiguous mapping of phonemes and allophones to each other. This condition, generativists such as Chomsky contend, is rarely met since two phonemes may be distinguished in some environments but not in others. A case at hand is Chomsky's Russian example where [d'ad, bi] could either be manifested as /d'at, bi/ or /d'ad, bi/. Examples from English include the glottal stop [ʔ] which sometimes belongs to /t/ as in little and sometimes /o/ as in between how awful.

Chomsky (1964, p.78) maintains that the principle of complementary distribution, central to phonemic phonology, is "basically, the principle of biuniqueness converted into a procedure." This biuniqueness condition has to be abandoned with regard to neutralisation and the result is ambiguity in the analysis. For instance, [ə] could be an allophone of any other vowel and there may be no way of determining to which vowel phoneme it is to be assigned to. But Clark and Yallop (1990) points out that there is no indeterminacy if one makes use of related forms, i.e., grammatical or semantic relationships, in the analysis. Akamatsu (1990) appears to agree with Chomsky and cites many examples to show that assignment on grounds of phonetic similarity and complementary distribution forces unreal and arbitrary decisions. One of them is the English stops after [s] where there are as many phonetic properties supporting an assignment to /b/,/d/,/g/, as to /p/,/t/,/k/; and there is accordingly no definitive reason for one preference over the other.

The second constraint that Chomsky refers to is linearity, which seems rather similar to the biuniqueness constraint. It requires a one-to-one correspondence between the phonetic and phonemic representations so that one mirrors the other not only in terms of manifestation but also arrangement. His example of writer and rider in American English violates this condition since they differ phonemically only in their fourth segments but phonetically only in their second segments (Chomsky 1964, p.74). He also quotes an example of vowel nasalisation in English where, for instance, phonemic /kænt/ is phonetic [kæ̃t], though phonemic /hænd/ is phonetic [hæ̃nd] and argues that "no linguist would conclude that vowel nasalisation is distinctive in English, and can't - cat constitute a minimal pair, while can't - canned do not" (Chomsky 1964, p.73).

Even when linearity is preserved, Chomsky argues that another constraint -- the invariance condition -- would be untenable. It stipulates that each phoneme must have a set of features which occur together only in the allophones of that phoneme. Chomsky's example is the alveolar flap in butter and throw (American English) where it is the allophone of /t/ in the former and /r/ in the latter, and since overlapping is not allowed in the phonemic analysis, the flap must then be assigned to /t/ which thus leads to absurdities such as /təʊ/ for throw.

The final constraint, the local determinacy condition, gets very little treatment from Chomsky who asserts that it is "rather difficult to state precisely"; except that it is more than biuniqueness and that "the unique phoneme representation corresponding to a given phonetic form can be determined by purely phonetic considerations, or, perhaps, considerations involving only the phonetic environment" (1964, p.73).

Another major criticism levelled against classical phonemics is that the phoneme is not "an appropriate entity for representing morphemes" (Hutchinson 1972, p.24). In other words, it

does not embrace morphophonemics -- "the study of interchange between phonemes as a morphological process" (Anderson 1985, p.301); and therefore cannot account for the change, for example, from /k/ to /s/ in electric and electricity, or /i:/ to /e/ in obscene and obscenity. Chomsky thus argues for a morphophonemic level of analysis and in Chomsky and Halle (1968), the main focus is "the construction of a rule component in which morphologically related word forms could be derived from a set of morpheme-invariant underlying forms" (Basboll 1988, p.192). Chomsky's concern is in postulating a descriptively adequate grammar constrained by conditions on abstractness of underlying forms and on application of rules. In other words, phonemic phonology is rejected because it requires "separation of levels in the underlying theory" (Chomsky 1964, p.85) and the phonemic level is not abstract enough (Schane 1973, p.7).

How valid is Chomsky's challenge to phonemic phonology?

First, it is worth noting that Chomsky's characterisation of the notion of phoneme and the rules governing the relation between phonemic and phonetic representations and some of the inadequacies of these constraints may not be an accurate account of the structuralist position and tradition. Linell (1979), Hutchinson (1972) and others point out that the above version of phonemic analysis is a particularly rigid one which has limited acceptance even amongst phonologists of the structuralist persuasion.

More importantly, Chomsky's challenge is not conducted in classical phonemics' own proper theoretical framework. The underlying assumption of the phonemic approach is, as Anderson (1985, p.302) puts it, that focus should be on the representations of individual forms, since only the forms themselves are observable and thus "real". The theory, in essence, is a set of analytical procedures in which levels other than the phonological one play no part, i.e., the mixing of levels in phonemic analysis is prohibited. Moreover, statements of distribution or rule-governed relations only enter the picture in so far as they help identify and classify the phonemes, and making generalisations about these regularities is NOT the goal. Classical phonemics has, therefore, been unjustly attacked for its lack of theoretical apparatus for explaining natural classes and processes, for discovering universals, and for failing to achieve descriptive adequacy and to deal with morphophonemics, when none of these fall within its theoretical confines. Linell (1972, p.267) points out that Chomsky's argument for morphophonemic analysis "presupposes the existence of morpheme-invariant representations as an underlying phonological level" and, as such, is simply not tenable because the phonemic approach was not set up to study the morphological level of representation. In any case, McCawley (1986) asserts that a morphological level of analysis becomes suspect when put under close scrutiny.

Phonemic analysis is also said to be not abstract enough (Schane, 1973). The question that follows is: What is it not abstract enough for? Chomsky examines classical phonemics using the generativist approach. Whereas classical phonemics is concerned with taxonomy, generative phonology's goal is explanation. The latter has developed a theory of distinctive features which characterises natural classes. Rules about phonological processes are formulated in terms of these features rather than in terms of phonemes. In generative phonology, surface forms are the realisations of various underlying representations which are affected by rules. These underlying representations are necessarily abstract if they were to have the expressive power that Chomsky and Halle (1968) intended them to have. Needless to say, phonemic analysis is not abstract enough for formulating elegant mathematical-like rules which have the power of generalisation. But the point is that phonemic representations were not founded for generating simple, elegant and yet expressive phonological rules, or explaining the nature of language as such; but for the purpose of teaching spoken languages. In Jones' (1950, p.260) words, "the physical view of the phoneme is on the whole better suited to the needs of ordinary teaching of spoken languages" because it is "more easily comprehensible to the ordinary student of languages than any other." The motivation for the different approaches can best be summed up by Householder whose words are quoted in Anderson (1985, p.170), "The European asks: Is it true?, the American: Is it consistent?, the Englishman: Will it help?" Chomsky's critique of classical phonemics seems misguided because it has not been done with a proper understanding of the motivation for phonemic phonology.

The phoneme is certainly abstract enough if looked at from the point of view that it is concerned with the abstract set of meaning-distinguishing sounds in a language rather than the distinctions between the actual physical sounds we say and hear. In other words, it is abstract in the sense that it is based on what "every speaker of a language unconsciously knows about the sound patterns of that language" (Yule, 1985, p.45). In fact, with the advances in acoustic phonetics bringing in an increasing amount of physical evidence, the philosophical debate over the existence or non-existence of the phoneme in terms of its psychological reality has been given a new impetus. For example, recent psychoacoustic experiments reported in Beckman (1988) point to "a phonemic segmentation of speech". Furthermore, this segmentation "may well occur at an unconscious, perceptual level even in the pre-literate period" (Derwing et al. 1986, p.45).

Conclusion

Phonemic phonology became important because it provided a descriptive account of dialects and languages that had never been transcribed before (Clark & Yallop 1990, p.331) and it derives its greatest strength from its practical orientation which has proved to be beneficial to language teaching and learning. Chomsky's criticisms of it are largely unjust because he has not examined the concept of the phoneme in its own theoretical framework but in the framework of generative phonology. Anderson (1985, p.336) reaffirms the value of phonemic analysis and sums up aptly the position of the linguist as regards generative and phonemic phonology, "...surely both have their place in an adequate synthesis of our understanding of the nature of language. As it becomes more and more evident that language is a 'modular' system, representing the essential interaction of a number of domains, there is no reason to doubt that sound structure, too, must be approached from several independent perspectives simultaneously." Chomsky's generative phonology should therefore be regarded as an alternative account of sound structure rather than a valid critique of phonemic phonology.

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Student-Produced Video Documentary: Hong Kong as a Self-Access Resource[1]

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Abstract

This paper looks at putting the production of a documentary video into the hands of the language learners. It is argued that this is an extension of self-access learning which gets the learners out of the self-access centre and into an environment where they will have opportunities to use the target language for a real purpose. As well as discussing the setting of goals the paper compares a variety of organisational models for such a project.

Introduction

Video is now familiar to many language teachers as a valuable teaching aid. More than a decade ago books were being written encouraging teachers to exploit the medium (Geddes and Sturtridge, 1982; Lonergan, 1984; McGovern, 1983) and the subject has remained popular throughout the intervening period (Allan, 1985; Tomalin, 1986; Stempleski and Tomalin, 1990; Cooper et al., 1991). Mostly the literature deals with the use of video, from varying sources, which is taken into the classroom to be viewed and focuses on the development of activities which revolve around that viewing. In this sense, video as a resource is as static as printed material although it is usually more visually attractive. Less widely documented, but nevertheless an important part of the literature, are attempts to actively involve learners in the video-making process. The claims made for such involvement are that it builds learner confidence (Charge and Giblin, 1988; Marsh, 1989), stimulates speaking (Pearson, 1990), maximises student participation (Phillips, 1982), can be the basis of excellent communicative activities (Allan, 1985), provides the learner with "fun, enjoyment and interest" (Coleman, 1992, p.36) and supplies learning experiences which are "more like those that occur in the real world" (Secules et al., 1992, p.480).

The above studies refer, almost exclusively, to using video within a teacher-directed environment. There is, however, no reason why video production by students cannot be a self-access project. 'Self-access' is not used here in Dickinson's sense of "the organisation of learning materials (and possibly equipment) to make them directly available to the learner" (1987, p.10), nor is it used in the way that Miller and Rogerson-Revell (1993) describe self-access systems all of which relate to physical settings providing self-access materials.

In this paper 'self-access' is being employed in the widest possible sense. It refers to learner access to whatever resources are available, be they organised, systematised, classified or just random. Although the group production of a video (particularly if it takes place outside a self-access centre) would not fall comfortably within Sheerin's basic assumption of self-access as an institutional resource providing organised materials, it does meet her criterion of "enabling

[1] This project was developed after attending a British Council Summer School at the University of Brighton, Sussex, England under the guidance of Prof. Brian Hill. My attendance was sponsored by the British Council.

learning to take place independently of teaching" (1989, p.3). In fact, Sheerin recognises that group projects within self-access "tend not to be so concerned with self-access materials" (p.197).

Other writers also allow for a wider interpretation of 'self-access'. Riley et al. (1989) define it as a system of learning which allows different degrees of self-direction to different learners. Martyn (1994) recognises that while a self-access centre is the most likely place to find resources for self-access language learning "learners need not limit themselves to these resources" (p.67) and Or (1994) concurs in stating that "self-access learning can happen anywhere" (p.53). In considering self-access Pang (1994) prefers to prioritise the learners rather than the self-access centre, which he argues should be considered as an "activity-based entity" rather than a "physical resource" (p.35).

The lack of a commonly accepted theory of self-access language learning is highlighted in a discussion by Miller and Gardner (1994) of the uncertainty about the similarities and differences between self-access language learning and learner autonomy. This is supported by Benson (1994) who states that "the concepts of self-access, self-directed learning and learner autonomy... remain ill-defined" (p.8). He suggests that as a working model self-access should be considered as an environment within which learner autonomy can be achieved. Throughout this paper the self-access environment is taken to include the learners' use of all available language learning resources including self access centres and excluding nothing.

Making Use of the Environment

Involving learners in the production of video should not be seen as a trick to keep them interested while trying to teach them something useful. It should be seen rather as a valid method for involving learners in a 'real world' use of their target language. In Hong Kong the 'real' use of English can be achieved relatively easily by using the surrounding environment as a learning resource. We can regard Hong Kong itself as a self-access resource for learning English within which there are a number of usable, and sometimes overlapping, microcosms; the tourist environment, the business environment, the educational environment, etc. These environments provide opportunities to use English for a real purpose and can be exploited in a number of ways; for example, the Professional and Technical Communications courses of the English Centre of The University of Hong Kong (HKU) require students to collect data in the community. Other courses and other institutions are doing similar things. Goldstein (1990a; 1990b) shows secondary school students self-access ways in which they can exploit the language learning opportunities of Hong Kong.

A further way of exploiting these opportunities is for learners to document aspects of life which are of relevance to them. This inevitably provides opportunities for 'real' use of the target language in some or all of the language skills areas. Such projects, usually undertaken in print form, have been popular in ELT for many years. Less common, but highly motivating for students, is for them to produce their own video documentary.

The Project

The rest of this paper will look at a student-produced video documentary project undertaken within the English Centre of HKU. It was undertaken by a group of 15 first year undergraduates majoring in a variety of Arts subjects. The group was attending a course in English for Academic Purposes. The completion of a project was compulsory but the topic, the method of delivery and all organisational aspects were arrived at by negotiation. Initially negotiations were teacher-learners but they soon became internal to the group of learners. It is, therefore, clear that this project did not allow total learner autonomy. Nevertheless, it was a self-access project despite the fact that it made no use of the self-access centre within the university.

Project Goals

It is important in establishing a project that clear goals are set from the beginning. Anything that is to be more substantial than a classroom activity or a piece of homework will require a lot of work from the learners. In an environment in which there are many conflicting demands on students' time it is unlikely that they will participate fully unless they see clear goals and are motivated to achieve them. A pedagogically oriented goal of providing or exploiting 'real' language opportunities may not be sufficiently motivating for the learners. While such goals are essential if the project is to be a worthwhile experience they should remain veiled from the learner until near the end of the project. They might, perhaps, be made explicit in a post-project evaluation session.

The more obvious project goals, that is, those immediately perceivable by the learners, should be concerned with subject matter. They should focus on the subject; why it is to be documented, how it is to be documented, how it is to be presented and identification of a target audience. For a project to be successful, such goals cannot be dictated but should be negotiated. Student motivation will stem from the fact that they have decided the topic and how to approach it.

The teacher, as facilitator, has an important role to play during the goal deciding stage. Firstly, it takes practice to allow students a high level of autonomy. Many teachers feel they know the 'best' way to do something. They are not always right and even if they are, it is not the best way unless students discover it themselves. Secondly, although the pedagogical goals may be initially unknown to the learners they still exist. The teacher has to find a way of balancing learner autonomy with meeting those goals. A unanimous learner decision to make a documentary in Cantonese about Chinese language television would produce a high level of motivation but would probably not coincide with the goals of an English language teacher.

The teacher's balancing act may be accomplished by exerting an influence during discussions leading to a choice of topic or may, more simply, be achieved by establishing basic ground rules at the outset. Such rules might specify the language to be used throughout the project or for certain parts of it. Alternatively, they might specify the target audience. The former option may look like the teacher is being encouraged to trick the students by offering them total autonomy but secretly controlling their choices. To an extent this is true but it is also true of the many occasions when we take an 'interesting' text or video into class with the purpose of getting students to listen, speak, read or write whether they want to or not.

For the project discussed here the latter approach was taken. Producing a documentary without setting any parameters within which to work is not a real life situation. It therefore seemed quite acceptable to partially specify a target audience. Students were told at the outset that the final product had to be understandable entirely in English. This did not preclude the use of Cantonese (or any other language) in the documentary but did mean that, like local television, they would have to provide translated sub-titles.

Project Organisation

Producing a documentary is a substantial piece of work requiring many hours of student input. To make the most productive use of their time and the teacher's time it is essential that the project be well organised. It is important that students be involved with organisational matters although this is an area in which they will almost certainly lack experience. The teacher again has a balancing act to perform. Students must make their own decisions but if allowed to organise themselves in an unproductive way they may never finish the project, which will be a demoralising experience.

There are a number of different models for project organisation which could have been used. A large-scale production model would involve all members of the group at every stage. The

drawbacks are that inevitably some students hide behind others and as a result benefits are variable. Also, such organisation would have been extremely time consuming and difficult for the group to manage with the consequent risk of the project losing steam and remaining unfinished.

An alternative model requires the forming of a sub-group within the class which would have been responsible for the whole project and which would have made use of other group members when required. This approach of establishing a 'project elite' would, perhaps, have resulted in a more polished finished product but would have been of minimal benefit to those group members who were not in the sub-group.

A further project model, and one which appears to be quite popular with teachers, is that of organising sub-groups each of which works on an independent project. Typically, when all projects are finished each group presents its project to other members of the class who often show little interest. Such an approach would have increased the workload for participants and would have fragmented the class.

The model for this project, selected through a combination of teacher guidance and class negotiation, was a modular one in which the whole project was managed as a series of achievable steps. Initially, members of the class working together defined the steps. They then decided which of the steps required whole class input and which should be assigned to self-managed sub-groups. Using this model every member of the class was involved in direct participation in full-class activities and in their own sub-group's activities. They also participated in discussions with other sub-groups when they gave feedback on their activities. In this way every member of the class participated to some degree in every step of the project. This had a positive effect on motivation.

A crucial feature in using a modular model is scheduling, particularly as students are often inexperienced in group time management. Participants in a modular project become very dependent on each other because of the inter-related nature of the work undertaken by sub-groups. This is a positive feature of this kind of project work but without good time management it could become negative. The teacher's role must be to make participants aware of the potential problems and to help them establish, from the outset, a set of realistic deadlines for each step. It is important that participants are able to discipline themselves or each other to meet those deadlines. Without good time management the project may fail and the learners may associate that failure with their ability (or lack of it) in the target language.

Once the project has been organised the teacher disappears into the background. It is important, however, to remain accessible to participants, probably more accessible than when just playing the traditional teaching role. Equipment needs to be provided and this can often only be done through a teacher. Problems may arise which need a teacher's support to solve, often merely because bureaucrats are reluctant to deal directly with students however reasonable their requests. Sometimes students may just want to discuss their next move.

Choice of Topic

The choice of topic was entirely in the hands of the participants. To teachers with more deeply entrenched traditional views on the teacher-student relationship this may appear to be a "frightening degree of freedom" (Phillips, 1982). The topic was the subject of hot debate in the first meeting with some students already raising objections to certain proposals on the grounds of practicality. It was encouraging to see that the discussion skills taught in class were being employed.

A number of suggestions were offered for discussion as a starting point to arrive at an acceptable topic. These covered the kind of topics that teachers imagine are important issues or that would provide enough detail for a substantial topic. Suggestions covered topics such as 1997, the current political situation (whatever it was at the time!), some aspect of the Hong Kong

educational system, etc. The students politely but firmly disagreed with their teacher and very quickly voted out all these topics as being of little interest to their target audience (see below).

The topic that the class finally settled on was that of the eating facilities available on the campus. This seemed like a very trivial subject and it would have been quite easy to overrule the decision and insist on a more substantial and 'meaningful' topic. However, there seems little point in offering a class autonomy but removing it if it makes the 'wrong' decisions. It was more important to ensure that they treated the topic seriously.

The concern over whether students had chosen an acceptable and 'correct' topic was short lived. A colleague pointed out that a sandwich-grabbing westerner could have no idea of the importance of food and eating facilities to Cantonese people. She was right, and the project participants quickly demonstrated that this was an issue about which they and their fellow students felt very strongly. Allowing total freedom over choice of topic provided the "commitment and psychological involvement favourable to language acquisition" (Colman, 1992, p.36).

Target Audience

Within the given parameter that the finished product had to be understandable entirely in English, the students identified their own target audience. Their goal was to make the information contained in their documentary available to all their fellow students. While a majority of the students of HKU are Cantonese speakers it is an English medium university with a small but significant body of non-Cantonese speakers. English is the only language which is accessible to all members of the university community. This is a 'real' use of the target language as it is the only way to prevent discrimination against sections of the student population.

Two kinds of preparation were needed for this project; subject preparation and technical preparation. For the former, group work and class discussion were used to bring out the opinions on the topic held by members of the class. By comparing similarities and differences students were able to more clearly define their position. It also enabled them to identify predetermined prejudices which might influence the way they produced their documentary.

Technical preparation was partially covered by a short video exercise that students had conducted in the previous term. While this exercise had made them all familiar with the features of the equipment, the product demonstrated that they were having difficulty understanding how to compose a shot. Essentially, they were using the video camera the way they used their own eyes. The resulting film moved around abruptly and dipped and swayed so much that it was difficult to watch without feeling sea sick. As a result a film producer[2] was brought in to give an intensive two hour lecture on how to put together the shots in a video film. The result is still not perfect but shows a great improvement.

Production Details

The class as a whole decided how to treat the subject. They opted to film various eating facilities around the campus and to interview users they found there. They decided which locations to target and drew up a list of questions to be asked when interviewing at those locations. Production teams were established and assigned a location. A 'studio' production team, which would create links between the various locations, was also established. A member of the class was also appointed producer. Her main task, as well as participating in a production team, was to keep everyone on schedule and to take responsibility for the final editing of the documentary.

Each individual in the class belonged to a production team. Teams took responsibility for a location or the studio. They wrote letters and made phone calls to get permission to film (where

[2] Mr Ian Hart, Director of the Centre for Media Resources, HKU has been involved in film production for much of his career. He kindly agreed to give this lecture.

necessary). They wrote scripts and decided what to film and who to interview. They did all their own filming, typically the actual filming was completed in a two hour session for each group. After filming the teams looked through everything they had and selected the best segments. If segments contained interviews in Cantonese they were translated by two volunteer translators. Teams decided the order in which their segments should appear in the final product and wrote detailed notes to enable the 'studio' team to create their links. At this stage the 'studio' team set up their studio in a classroom and filmed a number of sequences which would later be inserted at the relevant points in the documentary.

It is important to note that throughout the project team members were fully occupied with working on their own module but were also receiving constant feedback on the progress of other teams. The producer kept teams on schedule and made final decisions in the editing phase. It is also important to note that all teams filmed on different days reducing the equipment requirement to just one portable camera at any time.

Only when all of the above tasks had been carried out could the project move to the editing phase. Editing was undertaken by the producer, the teacher and a technician from the Language Centre of HKU. The teacher's role was restricted mainly to keeping the other editors within a realistic timeframe. The editing process was completed in four hours, a substantial part of which was spent solving captioning problems. Future productions could probably be edited in two to three hours.

The editing process was relatively simple. Each team had provided its original tape accompanied by a list of segments and the correct order in which they should be used (time code on the tapes made it possible to identify the beginning and end of segments to within one twenty-fifth of a second). The lists also contained the text of sub-titles and where to place them. In addition, the producer had prepared a list of titles and credits. The editing team merely assembled the components into one final product.

In undertaking this kind of editing it is important that everything is prepared in advance because editing is expensive in teacher and technician time. Although the experience provided intensive language practice it was for one student only (the producer) and cannot be considered the best use of resources. An alternative would be to provide simple editing facilities that a teacher can use with a class or at least with small groups. Even more useful would be to provide editing facilities which students can use on their own.

How the Learners Benefited

This project ran alongside a conventional course in English for Academic Purposes. It provided participants with opportunities to utilise for a real purpose many of the language skills they learned on the course. Their work in groups required them to discuss real issues and arrive at negotiated agreements in real time. The lecture on film making techniques required them to use their note-taking and (later) seminar skills. Participants also developed their presentational skills, not only for their appearances in the documentary but also for presenting progress reports to the class. In addition, at the end of the project students were required to write a collaborative essay about the experience. This allowed them to exploit their newly acquired academic writing skills.

As well as benefiting from language enhancement opportunities of direct relevance to their taught course, participants were also able to acquire skills in interviewing. This is not an easy skill to master in a foreign language especially when many of the interviewees are not good at being interviewed. Probably of more importance to the students than these benefits was the fact that they were interested in what they were doing and that they were having fun while doing it.

Despite these considerable benefits they are not the most important factor in considering the success of this project. Of much greater importance is the confidence that participants gained in their ability to function in English. The sense of achievement of a student who leapt up angrily

in class to make a passionate denouncement of a petty bureaucrat who had prevented the group from filming and then realised the denouncement had been made in English, can not be compared to receiving an 'A' for giving an oral presentation on 'Marriage in China' or any other topic which might have been considered dull.

This project was a confidence building experience for all participants but the level of increase was clearly more dramatic for some than others. The most notable success was a student who arrived in the class with a respectable pass in the pre-university English examination, wrote acceptable (if not wonderful) English and appeared to have no difficulty with reading. Unfortunately, the student was unable, whether in class or in private, to utter a single word in English to the teacher. It was painful to watch when a question was addressed to this individual because the result was a violent reddening of the face, hiding of the face behind hands and cringing in agony. Literally, the student was unable to speak. By fortuitous accident it was discovered that although this student would not speak to a teacher, speaking to a video camera operated by a friend was acceptable. Having started to speak in this way the student went from strength to strength and became one of the main presenters in the documentary. This individual is still shy and doesn't like to speak much (in any language) but when doing so is not afraid to do it in English.

Conclusion

The student-produced video documentary project discussed in this paper clearly supports the claims of authors who argue that production of video with learners offers other benefits to the viewing of video in class. It provided a realistic learning experience (Secules et al., 1992) and was interesting and enjoyable (Coleman, 1992) because the choice of subject was the participants' own. There is no doubt, particularly with the examples given, that the project also encouraged speaking in the target language (Pearson, 1990) or that it built learner confidence in using English (Charge and Giblin, 1988; Marsh, 1989).

Many of the studies in this area are small scale as is the project reported here. It is, therefore, necessary to be cautious in stating the benefits of the method. The participants were motivated, did become more confident and were subjected to a realistic learning environment. However, it is difficult to know to what extent these features are attributable to the novelty value of the project, the fact that participants were getting a lot of teacher attention and the maturity of the participants. Perhaps, for example, the benefits would have been less obvious if the project had been imposed on the students as a compulsory part of their course.

While the benefits discussed here would hold true for almost any environment, they are particularly relevant in Hong Kong where the opportunities for providing realistic learning experiences abound. The participants in this project chose to use the students and staff of their own university environment as a resource, both as a source of information and opinion and as an audience. They could just as easily have chosen to speak to foreign tourists at Star Ferry (Goldstein, 1990a) or businessmen in Central. They may even have chosen to interview local politicians, after all they seem to like being filmed. Real uses of language have an important motivational influence on learners. Hong Kong is a gold mine of such experiences. There is so much about which to make documentaries, a great deal of which can involve the use of English and yet, as a resource, the local environment is rarely exploited.

In establishing a project it is important to recognise what the goals are. Pedagogical goals are important but will rarely motivate participants, they must be firm in the teacher's mind and can be communicated to learners but there needs to be more. Participants must want to make the documentary, this is the only way to ensure that enthusiasm will not flag at a crucial moment.

Similarly, it is crucial that the importance of good organisation be recognised from the outset by the students as well as the teacher. Student autonomy in establishing their own working hierarchy and method of operation undoubtedly contributes to success. There are situations in

which the learners lack the maturity for this level of autonomy, in such cases the teacher will be required to impose a model. There are various models of organisation that can be employed. This paper suggests a modular model as it allows all the members of a class to be fully involved in a substantial project without anyone being overwhelmed. This is essential if momentum and motivation are to be maintained.

Technical details are of little importance as long as a minimum of one portable camera and a tape editing facility is available (this can be as little as two VCRs with a small editing deck). The important feature is that the documentary can be finished within the timeframe set and that the finished product is acceptable to the participants. It is possible for teachers to become side-tracked by pursuit of technical perfection. Such considerations should remain subordinate to the benefits of participation in the project.

Benefits can vary with the type of project undertaken. Of most importance is the fact that participants employ (rather than practice) their language skills by interacting in a 'real' language environment. Changing the focus of the project will allow different skills to become important. In this way documentaries can complement different courses or may be run in conjunction with an independent learning program. It is possible to adapt the methodology to suit learners of a higher or lower level than those described here. It is also possible to use the same methodology for the learning of languages other than English. Although Hong Kong lends itself extremely well as a self-access resource for those learning English it also offers facilities for students of the major European and Asian languages.

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Designing an ability scale for English across the range of secondary school forms.

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This paper details the construction of a common scale which attempts to span the English language ability range of students in the Hong Kong secondary school system. The TeleNex Computer network project, which operates out of the University of Hong Kong, aims to provide English language teachers in Hong Kong secondary schools with professional support. One of these areas of support is a testing database, which is attempting to recycle teacher-produced tests. To refine and feed tests back into the system at points appropriate to the ability levels of other schools and classes, the necessity for a common scale became apparent. Tests with common items were therefore designed and administered to Secondary forms 1 - 7. Using Item Response Theory techniques, the common items were then used as the basis for the common scale.

Introduction

This paper describes the initial construction of a common ability scale for English language across the Hong Kong secondary school system. The project operates under the aegis of the TeleNex Computer network out of the University of Hong Kong.[1] This network aims to provide English language teachers in Hong Kong secondary schools with professional help and input via computer to their teaching, as well as supporting them by means of a number of databases. One of these databases is a testing database, which was established with the objective of supplying teachers with a variety of reliable tests at various levels across the secondary school age and ability ranges.

The TeleNex testing database therefore aims to recycle analysed and refined teacher-produced tests at appropriate points throughout the database. To be able to insert teachers' tests at different points in the database in such a manner, however, it became apparent that a scale calibrated across the range of the Hong Kong secondary school system needed to be established as a reference point for different levels of ability. The author had worked with secondary school teachers, getting them to design tests, and had discovered that many teachers' concepts of test difficulty and the intended target audience were often very disparate. For example, a test which was destined for a 'low ability' Secondary 4 class of, for example, appeared to be rather more suitable - after item analysis had been conducted - for a 'high ability' Secondary 5 class. It was therefore decided to set up an item bank of short items which could then be drawn upon selectively. These could be appended to a test, and students' performance on these items would be used to determine the level of the remainder of the test they had taken.

[1] TeleNex operates from the Department of Curriculum Studies at the University of Hong Kong. It was set up with a donation of some $4 million in funding for both hardware and personnel from the Hong Kong Telecom Foundation.

The limitations of using classical item analysis as an instrument for comparing performance of groups or tests have received considerable attention in the literature on testing and measurement over the past decade. (Henning, 1984, 1987; Wright and Stone, 1979; Woods and Baker, 1985.) Classical methods of measurement theory are limited to one particular sample, essentially by using the correlation coefficient as the principal statistic. While classical methods are acceptable for single groups which can be normatively evaluated, or compared, it is not easy to translate these methods to situations where a number of tests need to linked together - as in the formation of an item bank, or where the ability of subjects needs to be calculated, independent of their scores on one particular test. See Henning (1984) for a comprehensive overview of the disadvantages of classical methods of measurement theory and the advantages of item response theory.

Since the bank of items needed to be established for students of widely differing samples of ability, and for samples of students who needed be compared one with another, Item Response Theory (IRT) appeared to be the appropriate measurement procedure to adopt in the current research project. The standard unit in IRT is the *logit*, which is a subject's log odds of producing a correct response to a particular test item.

Methodology

Seven tests - one for each form - were then designed with common items across adjacent forms. For forms Secondary 4-7, the tests were prepared with items from previous Hong Kong Examination Authority (HKEA) materials, and assigned to tests on the basis of their facility values in the public examinations. Discrete-point multiple-choice (m.c.) items were selected as the item type to be used - for a number of reasons. The HKEA was prepared to allow TELEC access to a substantial number of items (some 1,500 items were culled from various past HKEA papers); this meant that a bank of items could be established in a reasonably short period of time. Secondly, once the bank has been established, such short items would intrude only minimally into the time required to administer the main test. Typically, a short m.c. item takes a student 30 seconds to answer: 10 items would therefore only take away 5 minutes of the actual testing time. The marking - and subsequent analysis - of short m.c. items is also less time-consuming than other item types.

For forms Secondary 1-3, items had to be specifically prepared and pre-tested. Each test consisted of between 40 and 60 'proprietary' items for a given form, as well as items which were 'common' to the forms above and below. This elaborate design of common items across three levels was instituted in order that the validity of the scale could be examined from more than one angle. The test for Secondary 4, for example, consisted of a total of 80 mc items. 50 of these 80 items were proprietary S4 items; that is, the 50 S4 items were only found in the S4 test. The other 30 items comprised 10 common S4 items, 10 common S3 items and 10 common S5 items.

The tests were initially administered to mid-range ability schools in the pilot set-up of the TeleNex project, i.e. omitting schools which could be defined as extremely weak or extremely able.[2] Each school was asked to run the tests on two mid-ability level classes at each form. This gave a sample size of between around 500 subjects for each test.

[2] The definition of extremely able or extremely weak was made on the basis of a school's results in the Secondary 5 HKCEE public examination.

Initial analysis of test results

It is often assumed (this is the view of the HKEA) that the 'ideal' mean of the facility values of items on norm-referenced tests is generally around .50, since this ensures greater discrimination among the subjects taking the examination. Although facility values are not at issue here, these can be viewed as an approximate guide as to how a test fits its intended sample. Table 1 below presents the mean of the common items intended for each form.

Table 1: Test analyses: mean facility values of common items

SUBJECTS	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7
S7						.43	**.32**
S6					.58	**.36**	.26
S5				.57	**.43**	.29	.21
S4			.56	**.49**	.35		
S3	.59	.47	**.47**	.35			
S2	.58	**.45**	.44				
S1	**.51**	.33					

ITEMS

[Figures in larger font size cross-reference the common items for a specific form.]

It was mentioned above that test items were selected on the basis of appropriate fit for a particular form. It can be seen, however, that the fit is not as exact as might have been expected. This can in part be attributed to the fact that running the tests in November is quite early in the year, since the school year has only been underway for 2 or 3 months and for forms other than Secondary 5 and 7 there are still another 6 months of the school year left to run, with the public examinations typically beginning each year in April.

Taking .50 as the preferred test mean, the majority of the set of common items appear to be functioning reasonably well. The common item means for Secondary forms 1-4 are all close to a mean of .50, so given that the students will improve slightly in the remainder of the school year, the items have not been too badly targeted. The S6 and S7 test means have emerged rather lower than would have been hoped for at .36 and .32.

In terms of differentiating between different forms' performance the items appear to be functioning well. It can be seen that with all sets of items, the form below have found the items more difficult and the form above have found them easier. Consider the S4 set of items for instance. The S4 students achieved a mean of .49 on the 10 S4 common items. The S3 students found this set of items considerably more difficult with a mean of .35, while the S5 students found them much easier, with a mean of .57.

The only case where item means did not differentiate in the manner in which it had been intended was with the S2 and S3 tests. The means of both sets of common items were very similar for both groups of students. The S2 students achieved a mean of .45 on the S2 items and a mean of .44 on the S3 items. This matched quite closely with the results achieved by the S3 students who

had a mean of .47 on both tests. However, the fact that the S4 students found the S3 items easy and the S1 students found the S2 items difficult suggests that the potential discrepancy here may not lie as much with the items as with the students. This matter will be examined in more depth below.

The data was then analysed using a one-parameter IRT model. Logit values are computed with a mean of zero, and a standard deviation of 1. To avoid having negative values in the results logit values were rescaled to a normative mean of 60, with a spacing factor of 9.1. Wright and Stone (1979, p. 191ff) note that a scale without negative values is generally easier to interpret than one with negative values. This is especially the case with the current project where teachers are eventually to be referred to a suggested point on the scale according to a set of scores recorded by their students.

60 was selected as the additive constant since test items rescaled in this manner will generally have values of between 50 and 100. Since the scale is to be used with teachers, it was felt that the similarity between these figures and percentages would make the statistics of the system slightly less off-putting. The figure of 9.1 is used as a multiplicative constant following from Wright's discussion of the desirability of 'user-friendly' rescaled units (Wright, 1977, p. 203).[3]

The results of the seven tests are presented in table 2 below.

Table 2: Test analyses: mean logit values of common items

SUBJECTS	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7
S7						58.4	**63.0**
S6					51.0	**60.1**	64.8
S5				52.0	**57.5**	63.6	67.3
S4			56.7	**58.3**	65.6		
S3	56.5	58.5	**59.0**	63.9			
S2	64.9	**59.9**	60.9				
S1	**61.1**	69.0					

ITEMS

[Figures in larger font size cross-reference the common items for a specific form.]

The common items had been carefully selected on the basis of their match to the ability of a particular form. Given this, it had been hoped that the mean of each set of common items would have a mean close to 60.0. On the whole, the items appear to have been generally on target. The S7 items, however, with a mean of 63.0, suggest that the items are slightly above the average ability of the S7 sample, while the S5 items would appear to be slightly below the average S5 ability.

[3] Wright adopts the figure of 9.1 since this figure allows for the interpretation of the results of the probability of a person succeeding at a particular item in terms of user-friendly 'regular' intervals (10, 25, 50 etc).

Going from left to right across the scores for a particular form, it will be noted - as with the mean facility indices of the common items from table 1 - that lower (i.e. easier) scores have been obtained by all forms. Consider again the scores of the S6 group of subjects. The S6 students' scores on the S6 common items centre on 60.1 suggesting that these items closely fit the ability of the target group. The S6 students' score of 51.0 on the S5 common items suggests quite correctly that their ability is above that of the S5 group. Conversely the S6 students' score of 64.8 on the S7 items suggests that S6 ability is substantially below that of the S7 group.

The discrepancy with the closeness of the S2 and S3 groups' scores in terms of facility values on the common items of both the S2 and the S3 tests can again be observed in the logit values of the common items of these two tests. Again, however, the S1 students have found the S2 items difficult while the S4 students found the S3 items difficult. The conclusion that is therefore drawn is that there is little difference between the abilities of these two forms.

Constructing the common scale

The next step was to construct a common scale. While the common items for the various levels appeared to be performing appropriately for their particular level, it was decided to use all the proprietary items for a given level. This larger number would reduce any possible skewing of the results, which might happen, for example, if a common item which was substantially easier or more difficult than its partners. At this stage, misfitting items were also removed. With the S1 test, then, the starting point of the scale, the item mean was computed with 64 rather than 10 items.

The S1 scores were taken as the starting point, since values would then rise. If S7 is taken as the starting point, the scale may well end in negative values. While this is technically unimportant in that the values are arbitrary, it was mentioned above that it is easier to interpret scales which do not have negative values rather than ones which do.

The scale was constructed vertically; that is, by anchoring one subject's set of scores on a test with the test above it. For example, the set of common items in the S1 test had a mean of 60.0. The S2 test was therefore analysed with the S1 common items in the S2 test set at 60.0. From this, the values for the S2 common items on the S2 test were obtained - 67.2. These values for the S2 common items were then set in the S3 test before the S3 test was analysed.

The scale is presented in table 3 below. (It will be recalled that the scale has a normative mean of 60.0 and a spacing factor of 9.1. These units are now referred to as TAAS values (TeleNex Average Ability Scores).)

Table 3: linked TAAS values of common items

S7	88.8
S6	84.9
S5	78.7
S4	70.7
S3	68.4
S2	67.2
S1	60.0

The scale that has emerged shows a range of 28.8 TAAS points - 3.16 logits. This is comparable to the range of ability described by Henning (1984) with reference to subjects enrolled on a pre-university intensive English programme at five different levels in the US. Henning's scale showed a mean person ability span of some 2.8 logits. The range of student ability in the current sample would appear to be greater than that in Henning's sample since the sample extends across seven forms as opposed to five levels. The scale might therefore be expected to come out as rather longer than that produced by Henning. This is in fact the case, although only by approximately half a logit (some 5 TAAS points).

The scale does not, however, show a totally linear progression across the forms. Between S1 and S2 there is a substantial difference in ability: almost one logit (9 TAAS points) of difference. Between S2 and S3, as has been remarked, there appears to be only a minimum amount of difference, with the S3 group appearing marginally more able than the S2 group.

Between S3 and S4, S4 and S5, S5 and S6, and S6 and S7, the ability difference then appears to be more regular, with approximately half a logit between each form.

A validation of the scale presented in table 3 can be observed if the scores are now compared horizontally with the values obtained from the common items in table 2. This compares different forms' scores on the same items rather than using, e.g. the Secondary 2 items to set the values for the Secondary 3 items. Consider the S5 items which have been taken by four forms. These items show a range of 15.3 TAAS points: 52.0 (by the S4 subjects) to 67.3 (by the S7 subjects). This compares reasonably accurately with the values derived from table 3, where the S4 to S7 scale shows a range of 16.3 TAAS points. The situation with the four sets of S3 items taken by the S1 to S4 forms is not quite as exact, with a range of 10.4 TAAS points on the horizontal item comparison as against 12.9 on the vertical scale. This differential represents approximately one quarter of a logit, which appear acceptable, given the range of four forms.

Conclusion and significance

The basic scale which has emerged, that is of students in roughly the mid-ability ranges of each form, extends some 3.33 logits. This compares well with the results reported by Henning (1984) where a slightly more restricted scale of learners of English gave a mean scale extending some 2.8 logits. The current sample would be expected to have a rather larger range due to the fact that the subjects are drawn from the across the entire Hong Kong secondary school system.

As a step towards calibrating tests submitted by teachers to the TeleNex testing database and to suggesting appropriate entry points for students of differing abilities, the scale in the current research project would appear to be a viable construct: Secondary forms 1 to 7 can all be placed on a common scale.

Nonetheless, the scale must be seen as a preliminary measure. While the basic scale has been devised from a sample of some 500 subjects per test, this is still too small to claim it is representative of the Hong Kong school population as a whole. As a first step, further exploration needs to be done by examining, for example, the weaker end of Secondary 1 as well as the more able end of Secondary 7. This will then give a clearer picture of the more extended range of ability.

The current research exercise contributed some 500 items to the item bank. If the item bank is to be in general circulation in Hong Kong, however it needs to be substantially expanded. Millman and Arter (1984, p. 319) suggest that a rule of thumb is roughly a factor of 10 to the number of items that could be used on any one occasion. While it is difficult to quantify exactly the number of users who may be accessing the database at different levels, it appears that an item

bank in the region of some 2,000 items may be appropriate. Currently, further items are being trialed with a view to expanding the item bank to a size approaching this dimension.

The Education Commission, following the recommendations in the recent report of the Hong Kong Education Department's *Working Group on Support Services for Schools with Band 5 Students* (1993) is now investigating English Language proficiency at the lower levels of attainment, i.e. Band 5 schools, in the Secondary school system. A calibrated scale with a sufficiently large item bank would be a extremely valuable resource in this regard.

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The Political Vocabulary of Hong Kong English

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This paper analyses tendencies within the political vocabulary of Hong Kong English. The discussion is based on data from a computer corpus of newspaper reports from one of Hong Kong's leading English-medium newspapers. Implications for the description of varieties of English around the world in terms of ideological variation are explored.

Introduction

The changes involved in Hong Kong's transition from British colonial rule to Chinese sovereignty have generated a rich political vocabulary in the English of Hong Kong (Taylor, 1989; Davies & Roberts, 1990, Benson 1993) that has barely been touched upon in studies of Hong Kong English as a potential variety of world English (Luke & Richards, 1982; Platt, 1982; Newbrook, 1988; Bolton & Kwok, 1990). The aim of this paper is to describe and account for this vocabulary in terms of a theoretical framework in which lexical variation is related to ideological variation.

The data for the study comes from two sources: a one million word electronic corpus of Hong Kong news reports published in the *South China Morning Post* during 1992 and early-1993[1] and a file of clippings from more recent editions of Hong Kong's three daily English-medium newspapers, the *South China Morning Post*, *Hongkong Standard* and *Eastern Express*. Distinctive lexical features from this data are explained in terms of a dominant ideology of 'colonialism in transition' constituted within official and public discourse in Hong Kong. One of the major concerns of the study is to show how certain themes within this discourse are embedded at the level of the vocabulary and how a relatively small number of vocabulary items can work to sustain a discourse and the interests on which it is based.

The paper reports on one part of a broader study on the lexicography of Asian varieties of English that attempts to apply theoretical insights from critical language studies to the lexicon of English as a world language. One of the conclusions of this study is that lexical variation in world English is related to ideological variation at several levels. This part of the study focuses on public written discourse. It does not deal with variation in the spoken English of non-native speakers in Hong Kong, which would be a usual concern of studies in the field of World Englishes. This reflects a view that investigations of English in multilingual settings should treat the public discourse of printed and broadcast media and the private discourse of non-native speakers of English separately in order to determine their mutual influences. In analysing private discourse we would need to look more closely at the notion of 'ideologies of resistance' as well as the influence of public discourse. In other settings we might also want to look at post-colonial ideologies and more public ideologies of resistance. In this paper, however, the focus is exclusively on ideologies of colonialism as they are constituted in public discourse in Hong Kong. This focus reflects both the sociopolitical situation of Hong Kong and the roles and functions of English within it.

[1] This corpus is called the *Hong Kong South China Morning Post Corpus*. It has been compiled by the author with Joseph Leung, and is distributed with the agreement of the *South China Morning Post*. The corpus can be obtained from the author or by electronic mail from the Oxford Text Archive.

The paper is divided into three main sections. The first outlines the theoretical basis of the study in the field of critical language studies and its application to the lexicon of English as a world language. The second section discusses relevant features of the sociopolitical situation in Hong Kong and outlines some of the themes in official discourse. The last section describes some of the processes through which these themes are embedded in the vocabulary of Hong Kong English and illustrates these processes with examples from the data.

Ideology and the lexicon of World Englishes

The starting point of this work is the observation that studies of varieties of English around the world tend to describe linguistic innovations without explaining how and why they come about. Consequently, these studies are often left without adequate criteria for deciding what 'belongs to' a variety of English and what does not, criteria that would allow us to produce descriptions of these varieties 'in their own terms'. Studies in the field of World Englishes (e.g. Kachru, 1986) have so far explained linguistic innovation in varieties of English in only the most general terms through references to 'acculturation', or the adaptation of language to social and environmental conditions. Moreover, these studies have tended to make the reductive assumption that observable features of text express the national or indigenous cultures of those who produce them[2]. Employing the mediating concept of ideology, however, we are able to avoid oversimplified views of language variation as a mirror of cultural variation by showing how social conditions are *refracted* in language forms. The aim of analysing linguistic variation in relation to ideological variation is therefore to produce more adequate descriptions of varieties of English in terms of relationships between social context and linguistic form.

The theoretical framework for this work is based upon insights from the field of critical theory. Belsey (1980) formulates succinctly the "post-Saussurean" view of language on which this theory is based:

> Common sense appears obvious because it is inscribed in the language that we speak. Post-Saussurean theory, therefore, starts from an analysis of language, proposing that language is not transparent, not merely the *medium* in which autonomous individuals transmit messages to each other about an independently constituted world of things. On the contrary, it is language which offers the possibility of constructing a world of individuals and things, and of differentiating between them. The transparency of language is an illusion. (p.4)

This view of language emerges from attempts by Gramsci and Althusser to mould Marxist conceptions of ideology to the complexities of the 20th century. It forms the basis of work in the field of language studies by Fowler et al.(1979); Kress & Hodge (1979), Mey (1985), Fairclough (1989; 1992), Wodak (1989) and van Dijk (1993) among others. It has been directly applied to the analysis of newspaper text by van Dijk (1988) and Fowler (1991). A similar view of language emerges from the sociology of Berger & Luckmann (1966) which emphasises the role of language in the "social construction of reality" and the importance of linguistic form as symbol:

> Language is capable not only of constructing symbols that are highly abstracted from everyday experience, but also of 'bringing back' these symbols and appresenting them as objectively real elements in everyday life. In this manner, symbolism and symbolic language become essential constituents of the reality of everyday life and of common-sense apprehension of this reality. I live in a world of signs *and* symbols every day.

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[2] These assumptions are made throughout the work of Kachru. See, for example, Kachru (1986, p.28) discussing lexical innovations such as *caste mark, forehead marking* and *communal question* in South Asian varieties of English: "These innovations and their semantic extensions or restrictions are, therefore, indicative of acculturation of English in new sociocultural and linguisitc contexts, and reflect its acceptance as a vehicle of non-native social norms and ecological needs."

Edelman (1977), similarly, has studied politics as symbolic action, arguing that "it is *language* about political events rather than the events themselves that everyone experiences" (p.142).

The view that language constructs social reality challenges the twin assumptions that linguistic innovation in varieties of English is a medium for the expression of indigenous cultural and linguistic norms and that texts reflect the norms of those who produce them. Once the transparency of language is challenged, with it falls the assumption that linguistic innovations exist simply because the things they refer to are 'there' either within the speaker or the speaker's objectively given world. Varieties of English around the world come to be seen as constructions of reality specific to the social formations within which they operate, and the analysis of linguistic innovations becomes a question of understanding whose interests particular versions of reality serve and how they do so. Critical language theory also greatly expands the range of linguistic items that are likely to be considered under the heading of a variety of world English because the criterion that an innovation must somehow express local culture and belong to local speakers no longer applies. In the field of lexis we would certainly want to give much closer attention to the names of things, institutions and events than has been customary in the description of World Englishes. These categories of lexis have always had an equivocal status in World Englishes because they appear to reflect directly variations in 'reality' rather than variations in linguistic form. In the type of analysis I am proposing, however, it is precisely the potential for constructing such variations in reality that is of interest when we investigate variations in linguistic form.

In the remainder of this section, I will outline the methodology that I intend to use in analysing the political vocabulary of Hong Kong English. In order to do so, I will first need to establish the sense in which I use the terms ideology and discourse and then comment on how these concepts operate at the level of the lexicon. I will also need to discuss how these concepts apply to English as a world language and public discourse in a little more detail.

Ideology and discourse are conventionally considered as 'difficult' concepts that evade clear definition (for more detailed discussion in the context of language study, see Fairclough, 1989; 1992 and Fowler, 1991). The following are adopted here as working definitions. At the most basic level, ideologies can be described as systematically organised representations of the world which embody the interests and goals of particular social groups. Discourse is treated here as ideology encoded in text. However, concepts of ideology and discourse only become useful when they are understood in terms of social relations that are structured in terms of power and dominance within social formations. Ideologies within a social formation do not operate independently of each other. They are constituted in mutual relations of interdependence within ideological systems that are structured according to the relative power of social groups.

The dominant ideology of a social formation is one that fundamentally represents the interests of its most powerful groups. But this is not to say that these interests are represented directly. Dominant ideologies characteristically legitimise fundamental power relations by suppressing the overt interests of the dominant and accommodating those of the dominated. In social formations where the social order is legitimised and reproduced mainly through consensus, the interests and goals of dominant social groups are framed ideologically in terms of the interests of the society as a whole. Ideology is conveyed through discourse where it is recoverable in the form of themes, or propositions that underlie the coherence of text. Such themes are often present only in the form of propositions that the reader must supply in order to make sense of a discourse. However, these propositions may be explicitly formulated in other discourses, allowing us to make use of information from one discourse to make sense of another.

In seeking to represent the interests of society as a whole, dominant ideologies strive towards universality and objectivity. One of the ways they do this is through the struggle to define reality through language. Fairclough (1989) argues that language is not only a *site* of ideological struggle - the medium through which ideologies are expressed - it is also a *stake* in that struggle:

> Having the power to determine things like which word meanings or which linguistic and communicative norms are legitimate or 'correct' or 'appropriate' is an aspect of social and ideological power, and therefore a focus of ideological

> struggle. Seeing existing language practices and orders of discourse as reflecting the victories and defeats of past struggle, and as stakes which are struggled over, is, along with the complementary concept of 'power behind discourse', a major characteristic of critical language study...(p.88-89)

At the same time, ideologies struggle to assert the objectivity of language itself by establishing existing language practices as 'standard' or as universally valid. In this sense, dominant ideologies are conveyed not only through discourse but also within the linguistic forms which constitute it. Linguistic innovation in varieties of world English is therefore of particular interest for what it may reveal about specific ideological relations within different social formations.

Social reality is defined at the level of the lexicon through the lexicalisation of themes in discourse. In the study of word formation, lexicalisation refers to the process by which a lexical form becomes established as an item in the vocabulary of a language. In this paper, I use the same term more narrowly to refer to the embedding of an ideological form within a fixed item in the vocabulary. The process of embedding makes use of two basic mechanisms: naming and metaphor. I have already questioned the notion that things have names simply because they are 'there'. On the contrary, naming is a social act which determines what falls within the purview of shared subjective realities, and how those realities are categorised. When language adapts to 'new environments' it is the process of naming which determines what is 'new' and what is 'familiar', what is significant and what is not. In varieties of world English, then, what gets named and what does not is an ideological issue. Metaphor - in its most general sense, the naming of one thing by reference to another - is concerned with *how* things get named. When metaphors are used as names, they open links between categories within the linguistic system and close off others. By suggesting that a thing be perceived as one kind of thing but not another, lexical innovations can therefore attempt to impose new versions of social reality.

When ideological themes within a discourse are condensed into single vocabulary items, these items may evoke complex sets of ideological and emotional relations within the discourse. It is in this sense that a relatively small number of lexical items within a discourse may play a disproportionate part in sustaining an ideology and the interests that it serves. In the third section of this paper, I will look at how a number of themes within official discourse in Hong Kong are condensed and embedded in a relatively small number of items within the general vocabulary of 'the news'.

To conclude this section, I want to look at what the concept of 'English as a world language' means in the context of the ideas developed so far. As a lexical item in its own right *English as a world language* is itself a trigger for a complex set of ideological relations. It carries with it the notion that the rapid spread of English in a post-colonial world is a response to a need for an international language in an age of mass global communications. Implicit in the concept is an idea that English belongs no longer to the colonial master but to the world, an ideologically neutral instrument to be used in the service of whoever needs it. Phillipson's (1992) work, however, points to evidence of the systematic promotion of English as a world language by official Western agencies, and indicates that English is implicated in the maintenance of neo-colonial relations of dependence and the preservation of elites across the world. Within the multilingual settings of Asia, English is everywhere the language of an elite. Moreover, English as a world language is seldom ideologically 'neutral' as it is conveyed in the form of Western discourses of 'democracy', 'modernity' and 'progress' (Pennycook, 1994).

In Hong Kong (as in most of the multilingual settings of Asia) English is not only a second language, it is also an elite language in two senses. The concept of 'English as an international language' means that English constitutes a means for continuing Western involvement in, and influence over, Asian affairs - the communicative basis for a neo-colonial world order. 'English as an intranational language' means on the other hand that English constitutes a linguistic basis for social differentiation in societies where social status is linked to an ability to use English, and above all pass examinations in it. 'English as an international *and* intranational language', therefore, supports the internal social structures of many Asian societies within the global framework of a Western-dominated world order.

These observations have important implications for descriptive work on varieties of English in the multilingual settings of Asia. In these settings we may reasonably expect the English-medium press and media to be implicated in conveying ideologies which support indigenous English-speaking elites, and that aspects of these ideologies will be apparent in innovations in their vocabulary. In multilingual settings, English-medium newspapers may also play an important role in setting and establishing the local standard for English usage. Localised vocabulary in these newspapers may therefore be seen either as internationally standard or as part of a register which has an ambivalent status between international and local. In settings where English is predominantly a second language, and where English-medium newspapers may be used as a tool for language teaching, localised vocabulary therefore readily passes into general usage. While the most recent work in the field of critical language studies (cf. Fairclough, 1992, p.28) urges us not to take the ideological effects of text for granted by assuming an uncritical reader, we should also bear in mind that in the multilingual settings of Asia the readers' critical faculties must be exercised in a second language and often in linguistic climates that conspire to mystify the local character of much of what they read[3] In the next section, I will offer a somewhat more detailed analysis of what interests such a mystification might serve in the Hong Kong context.

The political discourse of Hong Kong English

Officially, Hong Kong is a British colony administered by a Governor appointed by the Queen on the advice of the Prime Minister. Under the terms of a 1984 agreement between the British and Chinese governments known as the Joint Declaration, China will resume sovereignty in 1997, when Hong Kong will become a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China. The Joint Declaration specifies that Hong Kong's socio-economic system and basic freedoms will remain, and that the SAR will be autonomous save in foreign and defence matters.

Leung's (1990a, p.33) comparison of socioeconomic indicators in Hong Kong with similar indicators in stable democratic systems around the world suggests that "*socio-economically* Hong Kong is well equipped to be a stable democracy". Hong Kong does share two important features with Western democratic systems, a free press and an independent legal system, but it does not have popularly elected government. In Hong Kong colonial rule in a post-colonial world is politically legitimated through a network of permanent and ad hoc advisory bodies. The first and second most important political institutions are the Executive Council and Legislative Council. Legislation passed by the Legislative Council requires the consent of the Governor and the Queen. Although the Governor has only exercised the power of veto once (in 1946), this limitation on the powers of the Legislative Council has been an issue of concern. Both Councils are advisory bodies with no power to make major decisions or pass laws without the consent of the Governor. Members of the Executive Council are appointed by the Governor while a minority of members of the Legislative Council are selected by direct popular election. Since the violent suppression of student protests in Beijing in 1989, Britain has come under increasing pressure from democratic forces in Hong Kong to democratise Hong Kong's political system before 1997.

An important aspect of the response to this pressure for democratisation has been to actively promote the image of a 'democratic' form of colonialism. At the beginning of the period of data collection for this project in November 1992, Governor David Wilson - a diplomat - was replaced by Christopher Patten - then Chairman of the British Conservative Party who had failed to retain his parliamentary seat in the General Election of that year. At his swearing-in ceremony, Patten declined to wear the traditional plumed hat and regalia of an incoming Governor. This

[3]This mystification is systematically supported by claims in the literature that each variety of world English contains within it a level at which it is virtually indistinguishable from 'international standard English'. Quirk (1985, p.6) makes such a claim for English media in Asia in his suggestion that the BBC World Service of London, All India Radio the Singapore *Straits Times* and the *Japan Times* "adhere to forms of English familiarly produced by only a minority of English speakers in any of the four countries concerned. And - mere accent alone apart - they observe as uniform a standard as that manifest in any language on earth."

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event was reported in the *South China Morning Post* (7.11.92, p.3) under the headline "British press critical of dress-sense" and the following extract reprinted from the *Times* of London:

> It was a day of ramrod salutes, red carpets, shouting sergeant majors and judges in wigs .... But Chris Patten, the last 'His Excellency' to be cheered ashore, defied convention, resolutely refusing to play the fancy-uniforms game. Unlike his predecessor, Lord Wilson, who sailed away last month in the crisp white twill suit and plumed helmet of convention, Mr Patten ambled ashore looking hot and rather shambolic in a drab grey suit.

This event was followed by a series of 'meet-the-people' style visits, public meetings and question times that suggested the Governor might be campaigning for a post to which he need not, in fact, seek re-election. The media has subsequently paid a good deal of attention to Patten's health and personal appearance, his family and their pastimes, and the adventures of their dogs. More seriously, the Governor has, at the risk of disrupting Anglo-Chinese relations, himself proposed a package of limited political reforms. These have become known as 'Patten's reforms', and have allowed the media to portray the Governor as a principal agent of democratisation in Hong Kong. These all indicate the extent to which public discourse has become important in the legitimation of British rule in its final years.

The experience of decolonisation elsewhere in the world suggests that the departing colonial power will attempt in the last years of its rule to secure its own interests under whatever arrangements may follow. The Hong Kong government's primary economic interest is therefore to secure the future of Hong Kong's 'laissez faire' capitalist system which guarantees access for foreign companies and capital. Given that Britain is committed to hand over sovereignty to China in 1997, this interest is best served by measures that preserve the integrity and autonomy of Hong Kong within China. One way of achieving this is through democratisation, but at the same time Britain has clear interests in maintaining stability and ensuring that the handover of sovereignty does take place. These interests set the basic framework for official political discourse in Hong Kong.

The Hong Kong government is also subject to pressure and influence from a number of sources through its various advisory bodies. Criticising the notion that the bureaucracy that administers Hong Kong is autonomous and ideologically neutral, Leung (1990b, p.18) argues:

> Empirically, the political domination of the élite class is evidenced by the overwhelming presence of top bureaucrats, wealthy business men and professionals in the Executive, Legislative, and Urban Councils, and in a number of important advisory boards, committees and tribunal panels which the government consults in making its policies.

While the democratisation of political institutions is compatible with the interests of the rising middle class and with the aims of foreign capital in Hong Kong, it is less so for the "indigenous bourgeoisie" whose aversion to democratisation makes them into political allies of China (Leung 1990b, p.38). This conflict of interests has created a degree of tension between those who favour a more rapid rate of reform and those who argue against 'rocking the boat'. This indicates that the political discourse of the Hong Kong media not only serves the interests of Britain as departing colonial power, it also promotes the interests of factions in Hong Kong who, if they are not actually pro-British, at least share aims and values which are compatible with continued access of foreign capital to Hong Kong markets.

The overwhelming majority of Hong Kong's inhabitants are Chinese and speak Cantonese as a language of first choice. English is used within the expatriate community, and for certain functions in domains such as the law, government and business. English is built into the social fabric of Hong Kong as an elite language through a predominantly English-medium education system in which success in English language is to some degree synonymous with academic and subsequently socio-economic success. Hong Kong's English-medium press by definition serves a social elite of expatriates and bilinguals. It also plays a role within the

education system where newspapers are often seen as means of broadening students' English skills. Hong Kong currently has three English-medium daily newspapers: the *South China Morning Post*, the *Hongkong Standard*, and *Eastern Express*. Of the three, the *South China Morning Post* is considered to be the 'establishment' newspaper, although a recent change of ownership has called this status into question. It is also, according to folk wisdom, the 'best written', and therefore has the greatest claim towards setting a standard for English usage in the local context. Although it is by no means uncritical of official policy, the *South China Morning Post* gives considerable space to government views. The Governor himself is an occasional contributor of feature columns and major official speeches tend to be reported in full. An indication of attitudes to current policies is found in recent informal photo-features on the Governor's lighter duties. One of these, for example, pictures the Governor in white jacket and tee-shirt at the Kowloon Cricket Club holding aloft a cricket bat. Under the headline "Patten bats for Hong Kong", the article reports:

> The bat, to be auctioned for charity, has received a $50,000 offer from an anonymous Indian businessman. Yesterday, however, it was held in the capable hands of Mr Patten (*Sunday Morning Post,* 17.4.1994, p.1)

It should be stressed, however, that Hong Kong's English-medium newspapers are independent and frequently critical of government policy on particular issues. My concern here, however, is less with editorial policy than with the support that is offered to a dominant ideology through a shared vocabulary. In the remainder of this section, I will attempt to get at this dominant ideology by looking at some prominent themes in the official discourse of Hong Kong politics. These will be illustrated mainly by quotations from Governor Christopher Patten either writing or interviewed in the *South China Morning Post*.

At the basis of official political discourse in Hong Kong is a map on which Hong Kong, Britain and China appear as fixed and stable entities. In this discourse, Hong Kong is generally to be found *between* Britain and China, who appear as agents whose actions have equal and reciprocal value with regard to Hong Kong. We see this relationship put into action in a statement by Governor Chris Patten (writing in the *South China Morning Post*, 14.1.94, p.21) commenting on the possibility that a Chinese government might put aside electoral arrangements made before its resumption of sovereignty in 1997:

> Of course it is true that we could put in place arrangements for the 1994 and 1995 elections and see them cast aside by China after 1997 in its first act of sovereignty. Beijing officials last month once again threatened to do precisely this - in blatant contradiction of their own post-1997 constitution for Hong Kong. But the argument that China may act against Hong Kong's interests (and its own) in the future, cannot be a persuasive argument for us to do the same today.

Reciprocity in the actions of Britain and China in regard to Hong Kong, however, is qualified by a systematic ambiguity in the separate identities of Britain and Hong Kong. In the first sentence of Patten's argument, the *we* that *could put in place arrangements* is ambiguous since such arrangements would not be made directly by the British government, but by the Hong Kong government. This *we* therefore appears to subsume Britain as the ruling power in Hong Kong under the idea of Hong Kong as an independent agent. In the last sentence, on the other hand, the *us* that *cannot do the same today* clearly refers to Britain alone. It can hardly refer to Hong Kong since this would introduce the pragmatic oddity of Hong Kong acting against its own interests. The argument continues:

> Moreover, if we have a credible system, why should China want to remove from elected office in 1997 men and women who will have been elected by their fellow citizens? This is hardly the best way of winning hearts and minds. Hong Kong has been a spectacular success story - largely the result of Shanghainese and Cantonese entrepreneurialism combined with the values of a plural society. Provided this combination survives the transition through 1997, Hong Kong

> should be uniquely placed to contribute further to China's successful opening up to the world.

In the *we* of the first sentence, Britain as ruling power is entirely subsumed within the Hong Kong that has *a credible system*. The second pro-form in this sentence, *their*, on the other hand, distances *China* from Hong Kong. The reference to Hong Kong people as the *fellow citizens* of China becomes almost ironic, and the passage continues with syntactic forms in which China and Hong Kong remain clearly separate. While asserting the existence of Hong Kong as an autonomous entity (both now and in the future) and the reciprocity of British and Chinese action in regard to Hong Kong, official discourse systematically distances Hong Kong from China, while drawing it towards Britain.

This discourse might seem to be a natural reflection of current political realities in Hong Kong. However, it is worth noting how the discourse actually creates social reality in the form of a *future* for Hong Kong as an autonomous entity within China. Chinese government negotiators on the future of Hong Kong have been obliged to acknowledge this discourse although it contradicts the long-standing claim that Hong Kong is in fact a part of China. But while Chinese discourse has accommodated to the reciprocity of British and Chinese actions in regard to Hong Kong, it has been less inclined to accept the ambiguity involved in Governor Patten's discursive status as representative of Britain in Hong Kong *and* representative of Hong Kong.

The ambiguity of Britain's identity in Hong Kong is also seen in two further elements within the discourse. The first of these is a frequently asserted assumption that in this period of late colonialism, Britain's own interests in Hong Kong are subordinate to those of the Hong Kong people. In a *South China Morning Post* interview (18.12.93, p.21) Patten answers a question as to whether a breakdown in Sino-British talks may affect British interests as follows:

> The main British interest which is at stake is our concern for the future of Hong Kong. That is what priority we have on our agenda... People talk about the impact of our determination to stand up for Hong Kong. There is no element in British-China relations that is as important as the proper carrying out of our responsibilities in this community.

Again, the discourse creates a *future* for Hong Kong, and by equating British interests with this future a separate British colonial interest is denied. Phrases such as *our concern*, *our determination* and *our responsibility* echo 19th century notions of empire as a 'burden' - a term which Patten uses elsewhere (*South China Morning Post*, 14.1.94, p.21) in a response to the charge that Britain's purpose in the last years of colonial rule is to prolong its influence beyond 1997:

> It's a bizarre view of our colonial history, a history in which we laid down the imperial burden with so little fuss, and such genial intentions to install and safeguard the institutions of a plural society.

The term *plural society* introduces the second element of ambiguity, which concerns the characterisation of Hong Kong's social and political system. Writing from a self-declared 'liberal' standpoint, Davies and Roberts (1990, p.104) characterise the official interpretation of this system in the following terms:

> Hong Kong's colonial government is answerable in the last analysis to the democratically elected government in Britain. Hence Hong Kong has a formally undemocratic governmental system which none the less adheres to democratic values. The key question is whether this state of affairs is sustainable after 1997 when sovereignty over Hong Kong passes to the People's Republic of China and the roots of Hong Kong's governmental system in an operationally democratic system are formally cut.

In official discourse, therefore, British parliamentary democracy underwrites freedoms in Hong Kong which are questioned only by the possibility of their removal by a future Chinese government which is portrayed as fundamentally undemocratic. This has enabled the present Governor to present himself as a 'champion of democracy'. Urging Hong Kong journalists to defend press freedom, Patten is reported as saying:

> "Hong Kong is such a free society. It is today, and I hope it will be after 1997" (*South China Morning Post* 18.1.94, p.3)

The ambiguity in the notion of a *free society* that remains under colonial rule is complex. It allows the idea of freedom to be presented in terms of a modified Western democratic discourse which emphasises certain institutional forms (notably a free press, an independent judiciary and freedom of thought within an independent higher education system) and conceals others (notably democratic elections and national self-determination). Crucially, it minimises Britain's colonial role in Hong Kong's past present and future, and creates discursively the future as *threat* - a threat of the removal of freedoms which is the ideological counterpart of Patten's *hope* for Hong Kong's post-1997 future.

The idea of *hope* links in to a further element in official discourse which emphasises, in spite whatever intentions and priorities Britain may have, the inevitability of Hong Kong's future integration with China. Patten argues:

> In Hong Kong, we are bringing the story almost to an end. Hong Kong, of course, is unlike our other colonies. Though no one could doubt the capacity of this great city, it has never enjoyed the prospect of independence. History and geography have spelt out another future, the assumption of Chinese sovereignty in 1997. This has determined and constrained political and institutional development in the territory. While it had been governed under the eyes of Parliament at Westminster, its own democratical evolution has been limited by its historical destination.

In this passage, the notion that Hong Kong's political and institutional development is constrained by *history and geography* is underwritten by a 'discourse of fate' signalled by the words *story, prospect, historical destination*. Establishing history and geography as abstract concepts without agents minimises the role of British colonialism in the creation of this history and geography. Hong Kong's current situation is effectively dehistoricised and decontextualised. Fatalism about Hong Kong's past, in turn, prepares for a future from which uncertainty is all but removed, a future in which the best that can be hoped for is a continuation of the present. By stressing continuity above change, official policy on the period up to 1997 has ruled out the possibility of radical social or political restructuring:

> The aim of the government in the period up to 1997 is that Hong Kong's system of representative government should be able to evolve gradually and progressively from the present system, in a manner that commands the full confidence of the people of Hong Kong, ensures that government remains both responsive and effective and provides for a smooth transfer of government in 1997 and a high degree of continuity thereafter. (Hong Kong Government, Feb. 1988, White Paper: The Development of Representative Government: The Way Forward para. 78 - cited in Leung 1990a, p.27)

Interestingly, this discourse of *smoothness* and *continuity* is suppressed in current official discourse, since current policy appears to allow for some degree of disruption in Sino-British relations. The same discourse has apparently been retained, however, by Patten's political opponents. As Terry Cheng reports (*Hongkong Standard*, 27.4.94, p.12):

> China should review its united front tactics towards Hong Kong as it has now begun counting more on itself to ensure a smooth transfer of sovereignty.... Now Beijing has identified a smooth transfer of sovereignty and setting up of the SAR

> government and legislature as its objectives. In the course of achieving these, it has decided that the British side, spearheaded by Governor Patten, is the main obstacle and enemy, which should be got rid of.

What I have argued so far will perhaps have made clear that discourse does not directly reflect the interests of dominant groups. Rather official discourse tends to rationalise and legitimise the pursuit of those interests by maintaining the social and political structures which best facilitate them. Official discourse often takes its stand on the status quo, but in the final years of British colonial rule in Hong Kong the imminent return to Chinese sovereignty rules out this possibility. Consequently we find discourses which minimise the colonial character of British rule and which emphasise the autonomy of Hong Kong. Paradoxically, British colonialism finds its interests (and those of 'the West' in general) best served by an acceptance of decolonisation as the inevitable. Anything else might create a climate of instability which would threaten the continuation of capitalism in Hong Kong and close off the region to Western interests. Within these limits British and Western interests are also served by the promotion of a 'discourse of democracy' in which notions of freedom are framed in essentially western terms.

It should be noted that material interests and discourse need not coincide. At the level of discourse, for example, British material interests are served by an assertion that such interests are of minor importance in relation to the interests of the 'community' as a whole. Also, discursive themes need not necessarily be compatible. The notion of a 'free society' in Hong Kong does not sit easily with the idea of its 'inevitable' return to Chinese sovereignty. Such contradictions are common in political discourse, however, and can perhaps be explained in terms of what Edelman (1977, p.5) calls "social adjustment through contradictory beliefs," an ambivalence that permits justification of changing roles and adaptation to changing social situations. Different discourses may therefore be available for different sets of circumstances.

The discursive themes identified in this section have been illustrated by direct citations from official sources, some of which outline official ideological premises in explicit terms. Although these citations illustrate language used for ideological purposes, they do not as yet show us ideology in language itself. Nor do they indicate very much about Hong Kong English as a variety of English. In the next section, however, I want to indicate how these ideological premises become embodied in the language through specific processes of lexicalisation.

Political vocabulary in the news

In the last section, I illustrated the political discourse of Hong Kong English with citations from official sources, particularly from text attributed to the Governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten. In this section, I will be using illustrations drawn by and large from ordinary news reports in Hong Kong's English-medium newspapers. Mass circulation newspapers are a form of public discourse to which social elites have privileged access. At the same time, the language of newspaper reporting can be considered a form of 'everyday language' in the sense that it is a language which we encounter daily, one with which we are familiar, and to which we do not usually pay any special attention. Moreover, newspaper reports are supposed to convey the 'facts' about events in the world without bias and in neutral terms.

In this section I will present evidence to show how the ideological themes discussed in the last section are embodied within the vocabulary of these newspaper reports. This is not to suggest that Hong Kong's English-medium newspapers are in any way intentionally 'biased' or 'slanted'. My concern is rather to show that the ideological themes of an official discourse are present within the normal, everyday, 'neutral' vocabulary that these newspapers are constrained to use if they are to be comprehensible to their readers. Since I am focusing on the special vocabulary of Hong Kong's social and political life, the implication is that ideological factors have a powerful explanatory force in relation to Hong Kong English.

In an earlier section, I discussed two major components in processes of lexicalisation, or the transformation of ideology into lexis: naming and metaphor. These components are too general to act as organising categories for the vocabulary discussed below. The eight headings under which I have organised this vocabulary represent a somewhat more refined system of categories. It is an *ad hoc* system, however, and one that contains a good deal of overlap since it is often the case that more than one process can be seen to be at work in any one lexicalisation. My aim, however, is not to produce a watertight classification scheme, but to point to certain processes in the lexicon and illustrate them with examples from the data.

Nominalisation refers to the transformation of a verbal process into a nominal. For Kress & Hodge (1979, p.34-35) nominalisation is a specific form of "transformation" which is described as a move from explicit to less explicit linguistic forms with the typical function of "mystification and distortion". They suggest (p.27) that when verbal processes are nominalised, there is a loss of modality and tense, simplicity replaces complexity and the nominal itself can become an actor or participant in other verbal processes.

Some of the more interesting nominals found in Hong Kong newspaper reports are those which refer to Hong Kong's future, such as *convergence*, *the transition*, *the handover*, *the takeover* and *continuity*. Each of these nominals refers to a specific concept in the political sphere. *Convergence* refers to a policy whereby changes in the socio-political structure of Hong Kong before 1997 should *converge with* the Basic Law for the future Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong drawn up under the authority of the Chinese National People's Congress. *The transition* refers to the process of transition from British to Chinese rule and *the handover* or *takeover* to the transfer of power which will be at its centre. *Continuity* refers to the continuation of Hong Kong's capitalist system and way of life beyond 1997. Each of these terms can be used as a nominal without any further gloss or explanation being necessary:

> ... convergence, the hallmark of Government policy towards the transition, dictates otherwise. It means that what is done now must not conflict with what is planned after the Chinese takeover. (*Sunday Morning Post*, 31.5.92, p.9)

> ... Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who told us to go home and let continuity and convergence run their course. (Allen Lee writing in the *Hongkong Standard*, 23.3.94, p.2)

With the loss of modality and tense entailed in these nominalisations, processes that may occur in the future are transformed into facts which appear inevitable and unavoidable. A social and political future is inscribed in the vocabulary and therefore placed beyond the bounds of reasonable debate.

Naming by analogy is a process of word-formation common when a language encounters a new environment. British, American and Australian English each have a bird called a *robin* but none of these birds are exactly the same. Naming by analogy, then, refers to cases where something is given a name because it resembles something which carries that name elsewhere in the world, although it may differ in certain crucial respects. Hong Kong has an institution called the *Legislative Council* (or *Legco*). Although the legislative powers of the Legislative Council are circumscribed by the colonial framework of government, it is referred to as a *legislature* and its members are known as *legislators*. These terms underwrite the 'discourse of democracy' in Hong Kong, although their effect is unclear since the status of the Legislative Council is well-known within Hong Kong. In the following citation, an independent *legislator* takes issue with the terminology:

> Being a colonial legislature, legislation passed by Legco can only take effect after it is signed by the Governor. After that the Queen can still disallow it. Thus, I have never had any illusions about Legco's legislative power. (Emily Lau writing in the *South China Morning Post*, 21.3.94, p.16)

What is interesting here is that in order to impose her own version of reality, Emily Lau is obliged not only to do the ideological 'work' of deconstructing an official vocabulary, in doing so she must also deconstruct her own role and status as *legislator* (something which she is, of course, quite prepared to do).

A second instance of naming by analogy is the term *mainland China* (and derivatives such as *the mainland, mainlander*) widely used to designate the territory and the inhabitants of China in contrast to those of Hong Kong. The oddity of this usage is that large parts of the territory of Hong Kong are geographically part of the mainland, and that Hong Kong island is itself separated from 'the mainland' by only a few hundred metres of sea. The term arises from analogy with the contrast between *Taiwan* and *mainland China*, where geographical and political distinctions more neatly coincide. In the case of Taiwan, the use of *mainland China* legitimates an ideology of a government in exile, one which has claimed jurisdiction over the whole land mass of China. The extension of the term to the Hong Kong context suggests that Taiwan and Hong Kong stand in a similar relationship towards China. This item in the lexicon, therefore, helps to dehistoricise the current situation of Hong Kong and to minimise the role of colonialism in its creation.

Hollow names. Edelman (1977, p.78-79) observes that in the United States political and administrative system:

> The names of administrative organizations and of their subunits call attention to interests that are widely shared and that evoke broad support; they never adequately specify the groups to which an organization has to respond in order to survive.

I have used the term 'hollow names' for instances, common in Hong Kong also, where the function of a document or institution is concealed behind a neutral name, which is in the final analysis semantically empty. *The Joint Declaration*, for example, names the basic agreement under which Britain agreed to return Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty, *the Basic Law* names the constitution under which Hong Kong will function as a *Special Administrative Region* of China from 1997, while *the Preliminary Working Committee* is a name given to the Chinese government's advisory body on Hong Kong affairs widely regarded as a 'government-in-waiting'. The names given to bodies of this kind are clearly euphemistic. They perhaps help to avoid alarm and ideological conflict and to ensure the transition to Chinese sovereignty runs smoothly. *The transition* and *1997* could also be described as hollow names which suggest that potentially tumultuous events will not in fact be so.

Relexicalisation is defined by Fowler (1991, p.84) as "the promotion of a new term where it is claimed that a new concept is at issue". Relexicalisation is a sign of ideological shift from one way of viewing an issue to another. Many of the lexical items discussed in this paper can be interpreted in this way, but here I will comment on one particular instance concerned with the designation of the political status of Hong Kong. Davies & Roberts (1990, p.69) report that:

> Since 1976, the term 'colony,' with respect to Hong Kong, has been officially abandoned and the term 'territory' used in its stead, although it remains legally a crown colony.

This redesignation of Hong Kong from *colony* to *territory* apparently coincided with the interests of the Chinese government, who succeeded in having Hong Kong removed from the United Nations' list of colonial territories. By ceasing to refer to Hong Kong as a *colony*, official discourse both dehistoricised Hong Kong and undermined the legitimacy of possible claims to *independence* at the level of the vocabulary. While manipulation of language by official agencies is by no means unusual, what is significant here is that the term *colony* appears to have disappeared almost entirely from the vocabulary of news reports. *Colony, colonial* and *colonialism* are still available for use, of course, but to use them (cf. the citation from Emily Lau above) clearly marks the user as a critic.

Mythical actors. Menz (1989, p.236) uses the term "mythical groups" to refer to categories such as *the average man* or *the silent majority* that are creations of discourse and have no clearly identifiable social correlates. I use the term 'mythical actors' in a similar but broader sense for social categories which appear substantial but are in reality products of discourse. A well-known instance of this in Hong Kong is the *sandwich class*:

> The sandwich class, so-called because it describes people who fall between those groups which are either eligible for public housing or can afford to buy their own home, is the subject of a new working group. (*South China Morning Post*, 17.5.92)

The *sandwich class* is a group which has acquired reality in relation to issues of housing at a time of rapidly rising land prices. At the same time, the term can be said to designate the 'middle class', which constitutes the potential political base for the 'democratic' movement in Hong Kong. In terms of the political considerations outlined earlier, the *sandwich class* might therefore be considered as a potential pro-Western bulwark against the 'Chinese bourgeoisie'. Significantly, the *sandwich class* is the only 'class' in Hong Kong to have been named in English. Its name suggests that it is the neglected victim of economic circumstances, more so it seems than those eligible for public housing who earn considerably less. As such it has been singled out for special attention, most recently through a widely publicised measure known as *the Sandwich Class Housing Loan Scheme*.

Mythical agents are often described in terms of dichotomies which place individuals and groups, willingly or unwillingly, on one or another side of a fence. In Hong Kong's political life an important dichotomy has been drawn between *pro-democracy* and *pro-China* tendencies. These are clearly not equivalent categorisations, however. Of the two, the second is the more problematic. Because the term *communist* is avoided for groups in Hong Kong, *pro-China* is a designation applied to a range of groups and individuals from those who openly support the Chinese Communist Party to supporters of capitalism who nevertheless see their interests best-served by an alliance with the Chinese government. *Pro-democracy* is clearly associated with positive values, while *pro-China* appears to have become an unwelcome label. Jackie Sam, writing in the *Hongkong Standard* (19.4.94, p.4) argues that:

> ... once China's patronage is accepted, the risk of being labelled "pro-China" by the media is very high. Until 1997, at least, the label, as Mr [Martin] Lee once described it, is "the kiss of death".

A week after this comment was published, the *Hongkong Standard* (27.4.94, p.1) reported that Jimmy McGregor had lost his seat on the general committee of the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce and with it the likelihood of remaining as a member of the Legislative Council beyond the 1995 elections. Mr McGregor is reported as saying:

> "Many chamber members, especially the larger, pro-China companies, do not back my views which support democratic reforms in Hong Kong."

In response, the newly-elected chairman, William Fung, is reported as saying:

> "If you look at the composition of our general committee membership, I don't know how anyone can say it is pro-China,... We are p[illegible]-Hong Kong".

The *pro-democracy / pro-China* dichotomy provides a potentially powerful set of labels. To be *pro-China* is to be under suspicion of being both 'anti-democracy' and 'anti-Hong Kong'. To be *pro-democracy* on the other hand does not seem to carry the corresponding stigma of being either 'pro-Britain' or 'anti-China'.

A similar dichotomy is drawn between *local* and *expatriate*:

> Local and expatriate civil service unions have been holding confidential talks with the government for the past three weeks. (*Hongkong Standard*, 23.3.94, p.3)

The uses of the word *local* and its derivatives in Hong Kong English are discussed in some detail in Benson (1994). Since that paper was written, the issue of the possible transfer of senior civil servants on expatriate contracts to local terms has blown up. The debate on this issue has become a debate over categorisations, with expatriate unions challenging the dichotomy by claiming that the term *local* could be applied to long-serving *expatriates* who have acquired Hong Kong resident status. Here it seems that a dichotomy which has in the past helped to distinguish the interests of the colonial power from those of the colonised may have come back to haunt those who may have found it so useful in the past.

Local and *expatriate* are membership categories that obscure a number of complex issues of nationality and ethnicity. Membership categories for nationality and ethnicity in Hong Kong are too complex to cover in detail in this paper. It is worth noting, however, the ambiguity of the word *Chinese*. On the one hand this refers to the ethnicity of an overwhelming majority of the residents of Hong Kong, while on the other hand it refers to the nationality of the residents of the People's Republic of China. The word *local* often (but by no means always) substitutes for the first of these senses, creating a possible dichotomy between *local* and *Chinese*. The basis of this dichotomy is less than clear, however, since so many of the present population of Hong Kong were either born in the People's Republic of China or retain family ties there. However real this dichotomy may be, we can observe that it is at least reinforced in the vocabulary of Hong Kong English, through repeated use of *Chinese* (and indeed *China*) to refer to the People's Republic of China alone. While distinctions in the vocabulary place distance between Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China, however, they do not appear to give Hong Kong a strong independent identity. One of the most remarkable features in the *South China Morning Post* data is the complete absence of any single term that serves as a name for 'a person who comes from Hong Kong' other than *Hong Kong resident, local man/woman*, and so on (the word *Hongkonger* is used occasionally in the *Hongkong Standard*, but does not appear at all in the corpus of Hong Kong news reports).

Fixed collocations are multi-word combinations that are regularly found within a corpus of text. Here I will mention two types. Adjective-noun collocations and longer nominal forms which I call 'incantations'.

Fixed adjective-noun collocations function as simple nominals. When this happens, a number of ideological effects can occur. Fairclough (1989, p.113) notes, for example, how in the fixed collocations *sick behaviour* and *healthy behaviour*, a noun from the domain of psychology and adjectives from the medical domain are forced together in an apparently 'natural' way. Fowler & Kress (1979, p. 32) observe that the collocation *untrained children* (used in the context of a set of swimming pool rules) establishes a process which the children have undergone (or in this case failed to undergo) as an attribute of the children themselves. Edelman (1977, p.110) calls attention to the use of descriptive terms specifying merit (*deserving poor, public-spirited businessman*, and so on):

> All these purport to be descriptive terms, based on observations or reliable inference from observations. Yet each one takes for granted a great deal that is controversial, unknown, or false... Their use in political discussion discourages the tentativeness and continuing critical stance towards the mental processes of the observer that are the hallmark of science.

One striking instance of this in the *South China Morning Post* corpus is the use of the terms *illegal immigrant(s)* and *illegal immigration*. In the corpus under study, *immigrant(s)* and *immigration* are in fact almost exclusively used in conjunction with the word *illegal*, possibly tending to the conclusion that immigration is by definition an illegal activity. The use of these terms also creates an impression that Hong Kong is at one and the same time a society under siege and a highly desirable place to live (evoking both threat and reassurance - twin elements of what Edelman [1977, p.4] calls the "primary political symbol" of "security"). The two main sources of

'illegal immigrants' into Hong Kong are Vietnam and the People's Republic of China. In the case of the Vietnamese, the designation attributes an intention to remain in Hong Kong that cannot be assumed. In the following extract from the *South China Morning Post* (12.6.92, p.7) a group of Vietnamese are presumed to be 'illegal immigrants' (to where is not entirely clear) before the fact:

> Overseas intelligence units based in Hong Kong are tracking another shipload of 53 ex-China Vietnamese illegal immigrants (ECVIIs) off the coast of Indonesia in the latest "human cargo" vessel making its way to Australia.

The use of the term *illegal immigrants* in relation to citizens of the People's Republic of China has the effect of further emphasising its distance from Hong Kong. In both cases, *immigrant* contrasts with *refugee*. Both terms are available within the discourse to respond to changing needs and political climates.

I use the term 'incantation' to refer to longer collocations that appear to have a certain ritualistic quality within the discourse. One of these is *the run up to 1997*

> "In the run up to 1997, many issues have to be settled between the two governments... As the run up proceeds, I don't think anyone, including Beijing and London, believes they can administer Hong Kong on the basis of their accords alone" (Henry Tang Ying-yen quoted in the *South China Morning Post*, 5.12.93, p.11)

Like *the transition*, *the run up to 1997* helps to create a solidity for a future which has yet to arrive. Moreover, it gives a name to a period of time which is continually shifting - from 'now' until 1997. An alternative term might be *the countdown to 1997*, but this phrase is rarely used, perhaps because of the negative connotations of *countdown* in comparison to *run up*. A second ritual phrase applied to an event is *the June 4, 1989, crackdown*:

> The nine CRC legislators supported the model after the June 4, 1989, crackdown. Yesterday, the 20-strong centre said smooth transition and convergence was more important and decided to move an amendment against the motion. (*South China Morning Post*, 12.6.92, p.7)

The June 4, 1989, crackdown refers to the events in Tiananmen Square in which student demonstrations were violently suppressed by military force. The use of the term *crackdown* is one that appears to have become standard after some debate in the media about what these events should be called (one alternative being *massacre*).

Intertextuality refers to the ways in which texts are based upon and refer to other texts or 'stories'. It is applied here to refer to the insertion of imagery from textual sources into the vocabulary itself. A number of images in common Hong Kong usage are drawn from references to classical Chinese literature (*the four little dragons*, for example, referring to the booming capitalist economies of Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea). Here I will call attention to imagery from three more recent sources:

> In return there dangles what British and Hongkong officials have always regarded as a great prize - a through train, under which legislators elected in 1995 can stay on till 1999, despite the change of sovereignty. (*Sunday Morning Post*, 31.5.92, p.9)

The image of the *through train* is drawn from the name of the train which allows passengers to travel from Hong Kong to Guangzhou and vice versa without disembarking at the Hong Kong - China border. This is apparently an official name appearing, for example, on signs at Kowloon railway station. In the political sphere the principle of a *through train* for officials elected in 1995 has become a contentious issue in the light of proposed electoral reforms. While the image of continuity works independently of its specific reference, its intertextual reference to a major symbol of Hong Kong - China co-operation is important in that it forces a link between two events

in the political sphere (the opening of the railway and the 1995 elections) which might not otherwise be apparent.

An image that has become increasingly important as China has begun to take a more active role in Hong Kong politics through its advisory bodies is that of the *second kitchen* or *second stove*:

> China also began to set up what it called its second stove, the Preliminary Working Committee (PWC), widely seen as a future alternative power centre to the Hong Kong Government. The description was rejected by China. (*South China Morning Post*, 17.1.94, 'Hong Kong Annual Review', p.6)

The *second stove* contains an reference to Chinese stories in which a second wife arrives in a household and establishes a rival stove or kitchen to that of the first wife. The image is one of domestic disharmony which, although its coinage is attributed to Chinese government officials, has been maintained by the Hong Kong English media. The media frequently offer alternative versions of the PWC. The *South China Morning Post* (3.5.94, p.1), reporting on a meeting of the PWC in Hong Kong attended by its secretary-general Lu Ping, describes it as "the organisation charged with speeding up preparations for Beijing's takeover of Hong Kong." But in the same article it is noted that "people within and outside the British administration have voiced their concern that it would appear to be China's power base in the territory." The *second stove* provides a compact image for the second of these interpretations, one which, moreover, succeeds in distancing the British administration from what is portrayed as a domestic, Chinese squabble.

The third image I want to discuss is that of the *kowtow*:

> Two issues are at stake: can Hong Kong alone decide what films to screen; and has the Urban Services Department (USD) kowtowed to Beijing and exercised self-censorship in its selection of movies? (*South China Morning Post*, 21.3.94, p.17)

Kowtow refers to a bowing procedure (touching the head to the ground nine times) used as a mark of respect to higher officials in imperial China. A specific reference is also made to the story of the first British mission to the imperial court at Peking in 1793, which was turned away because of Lord McArtney's refusal to kowtow to the Emperor. A more recent connection can be made with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's famous statement that Britain would not "kowtow to Beijing," a connection which links the image to the element in official discourse which asserts that Britain is 'determined to stand up for Hong Kong'. The citation above refers to the possibility that the USD may have declined to screen Chinese films that are banned in China for fear of offending Chinese authorities. Through the *kowtow* image, however, assertion of 'freedom of expression' becomes linked intertextually to the story of British colonialism. This single vocabulary item, therefore, helps to minimise the role of Britain as colonial power in Hong Kong, and rewrite its history as a challenge to the imperial 'arrogance' of China.

Dissociation strategies refer to a number of textual devices (such as quotation marks, italicisation or the phrase *so-called*) that can be used to dissociate a writer from his or her text. In the Hong Kong context, dissociation appears to contribute to the lexicalisation of certain items. This is particularly true of items characterising China, its people and policies, which acquire a value in establishing discursive distance between Hong Kong and China. Here I will refer to three aspects of dissociation.

The use of quotation marks to enclose concepts which are seen to belong in some special way to China is a common device:

> "One country, two systems" was Deng Xiaoping's vision - a goal which Hong Kong and Britain could readily share. (Chris Patten writing in the *South China Morning Post*, 14.1.94, p.21)

Here Chris Patten raises a concept which is Chinese both in its origin and in its formulation. In spite of the overt acceptance of the principle that China and Hong Kong should be a single country with two social and economic systems, the quotation marks and the preservation of the Chinese syntax suggest a certain ambivalence. The value of the term is not simply in the concept that it expresses, but in its assertion that this is a concept which China has initiated and to which China itself should adhere.

Distancing is especially evident in newspaper reporting of political affairs in China itself. This is realised through the use of highly stylised and often obscure vocabulary:

> Alone of the so-called Eight Immortals who run China behind the scenes, Mr Li, who was state president from 1983 to 1988, had refused to even give lip service to the "new wave of reform" unleashed by the patriarch in southern China early this year. (*South China Morning Post*, 23.6.92, p.1)

In this extract the words *Eight Immortals*, *"new wave of reform"* and *the patriarch* [Deng Xiaoping] contribute to the sense of dramatic unreality conveyed by the reporting style. This style is one which has a long history in the enthusiastic acceptance of word-for-word translations of Chinese slogans and names (*let a hundred flowers bloom, the great leap forward, the cultural revolution*) into the vocabulary of Western discourses on China.

Lastly, I will give one example of a process of word-play by no means uncommon in the Hong Kong English-medium press. This consists in taking a term from the political sphere and playing with it in the context of a lighter piece. The following extract reports on incoming Chief Secretary Anson Chan's problems in moving into the official residence previously occupied by David Ford. The piece hinges on the fact that Anson Chan is the first non-expatriate to occupy this senior civil service post, and on the assumption that while 'Westerners' cook with electricity, 'Asians' prefer gas:

> Anson Chan says she will have to set up a second kitchen of her own ... [T]he new Chief Secretary was asked repeatedly just how long it would be until she moved into her new residence. "Not until at least Easter," she replied. The home's last occupant, Ford, seems to have left just too much to refurbish... The electric stove - no good to even cook a stick of choi sum - had to be replaced with a gas model that cooked, Hongkong-style, with a fast flame, she said. (*Hongkong Standard*, 21.12.93, p.1)

In this extract an entire story has been constructed around a play on the words *second kitchen*, a characterisation of the Preliminary Working Committee (see above). The ridicule of the words can be seen as a minimisation of the institution itself - a minimisation which appears to support official discourse since elsewhere (*South China Morning Post*, 3.5.94, p.1) we read that Governor Chris Patten himself has "ridiculed the committee as inconsequential". What is of interest here is that the use of a word outside its usual contexts can be taken as a sign of its lexicalisation. In this case, however, the process by which it becomes embedded in the wider vocabulary is seen to be fundamentally ideological.

Conclusion

The main objective of this paper has been to demonstrate that it is possible to discuss and account for localised vocabulary in Hong Kong's English-medium newspapers in terms of the operation of ideologies within a localised discourse. In the process, it has become evident that this vocabulary does not directly reflect or express the cultural and linguistic norms of the indigenous population of Hong Kong. On the contrary, this vocabulary is closely related to ideologies that are *colonial* in character. I have, however, focused on a narrow field within Hong Kong English,

namely political vocabulary as it is represented in English-medium newspapers and the study therefore leaves a number of questions unanswered. Are the vocabulary items discussed in this paper specific to newspapers, or are they also present in wider usage? Would similar methods of analysis be effective in analysing other discourses or genres in the English of Hong Kong? Further research into electronic corpora of `learner English' and `academic English' on Hong Kong issues may help to answer these questions.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that the research presented here may well fall foul of the current emphasis in critical language studies on the ways in which texts are received and interpreted by their readers. The ideological effects of the vocabulary discussed here can in no way be taken for granted. What must be made clear is that a vocabulary of colonialism does not mean that alternative views cannot be expressed. Nor should we ignore the bilingual context of Hong Kong's political discourse. What I have offered here is my own interpretation of a limited set of vocabulary items from a limited area of discourse within Hong Kong . This is not a `correct' interpretation of the `meaning' of words. Indeed, in terms of the type of analysis I have attempted, meaning does not adhere to words themselves, it is present only their evaluation from multiple standpoints and in multiple contexts. By offering these words up for debate, however, I do hope to challenge the illusion that their meanings are in any way transparent.

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Book Reviews

Longman Language Activator - A Review

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This is clearly a major new venture in reference publishing. You do not need to look at the main body of the work to find out; a glance at the Contents page will suffice. There you will see illustrious names such as Quirk, Leech, Brown, all assembled to demonstrate the value and validity of the work in contributions to a preamble that contains more than 20 pages. Could it be that Longman are not so sure that the book can speak for itself? I think it can.

I will review the work in the framework of the following questions:

1) Is it really innovative, and how?
2) Is it well designed/easy to use?
3) Does it meet a real need? Who will find it useful?

In short, the concept, design and use of the book.

Concept

The 'Activator' is certainly innovative, but perhaps not to the extent the publishers claim. Something similar has been around for a long time in the shape of thesauruses. The Activator borrows the idea of grouping words according to meaning - 1052 concepts, to be precise - from this source. What distinguishes it from thesauruses are the extended definitions designed to differentiate similar words, and the fact that it is intended for non-native speakers.

Is it really 'the world's first production dictionary' as the cover claims? If this means encouraging learners to use words that they have never encountered before, as Leech seems to suggest ('But in a true production dictionary, we need to find access even to words we have never heard of before.' - page F12), then I would have serious doubts. It has long been axiomatic that receptive use precedes active; for this reason learners are discouraged from consulting ordinary dictionaries to find new words for use in written assignments. There is so much involved in knowing a word productively that even the excellent information provided here would be unable to prevent misuse; factors such as getting the style right, using the appropriate structure, avoiding ambiguity caused by other meanings of the same word, cannot be learnt overnight. However, if

the idea is to bring out receptive knowledge more quickly, then I believe it will be successful; in this sense 'activator' is an appropriate title.

Another way 'into' the Activator is to draw a parallel with reference grammars in terms of the form/meaning dichotomy. Grammars until recently tended to be form-based; you started with, say, the system of tenses, moved on to the individual tenses and then, only at the very end, you were told what meanings they had. Leech and Svartvik's 'A Communicative Grammar of English' (Longman 1975) and the Collins Cobuild English Grammar (Collins 1990) reversed this process to some extent by starting with the general meanings or notions involved in grammar. The Activator differs from traditional dictionaries in the same way: instead of organizing itself along formal lines (the words), it is the meanings that take precedence. I must confess to being surprised that the publishers did not stress this undoubtedly novel aspect of the book more.

As a result of this meaning basis, the Activator suffers from problems that affected earlier approaches that sought to emphasise meaning over form in language learning. Firstly, learners can be faced with an excessive choice of forms for expressing one single meaning. Users of the Activator who have found their way to the page containing the required general meaning, indicated by a key-word, and who select the appropriate specific meaning from a menu, will still have to pick from a long list of possibilities. This recalls the long lists of grammatical forms that were given as exponents of meaning in the notional/functional courses of the 1970's. At least here the definitions provide some reason for their choice.

Secondly, parts of speech are inevitably mixed up in the same section. DRUNK (sub-meaning 5) contains the following exponents: BE OVER THE LIMIT, UNDER THE INFLUENCE, DRINK AND DRIVE, DRINK DRIVING/DRUNK DRIVING, DRUNK DRIVER. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but users will need to possess advanced manipulative skills if they are to be able to implement all of these possibilities.

Thirdly, there are inevitable concessions to form. One is in the shape of a formally-based section which complements and is cross-referenced to the meanings. In the Activator, the search for the right word will typically begin with another word; the concept is only a mediating factor between the two. Hence it is necessary to have a list of lexical items cross-referenced to the words. The other point is that the ideal semantically-based reference work has not yet been written; you do not get a progressive refinement of meaning which leads finally to the formal exponents; at a certain level of generality there is a switch to forms (be they structural or lexical items) whose individual meanings are then detailed.

Design

So the idea is there; how is it realised? The vast majority of buyers will not pause to consider the theory behind the Activator but will press straight on to the text, and it is there that success or failure will be determined. Is the book well designed? Is it easy to use?

At first sight the page layout appears rather confusing, but this is understandable, given that there is much more variety on each page than in a traditional dictionary. The user soon adjusts to it, and overall the impression is of something rather attractive and friendly; the large print and bold face for headwords enhances this, even if, at 1600 pages, it is not a book to be tossed away lightly.

The text consists of the following:

- key words, arranged alphabetically, denoting a general meaning or concept, followed by a 'menu' of numbered sub-meanings. These more precise meanings are then dealt with one by one; the words and expressions that are their exponents are each followed by detailed definitions.

- signposts, or 'access-maps' which are designed to help when a word with different meanings is covered by more than one concept. For example, on page one, there is a signpost for 'about' which directs users either to the key-word ABOUT (which is just below) if the sense required is 'about a subject', or to APPROXIMATELY if the sense is 'not exactly'.
- lists of other lexical items in alphabetical order, with cross-references to the keep word under which they can be found. Thus the user can work alphabetically through the book to find a word, whether it is a key word or not.

There will inevitably be discussion about certain aspects of the design; for example why so many/few concepts, why not organise them differently? This was not a problem for me, but other issues were:

1) The choice of key words for the concepts. Choosing language to describe language is admittedly a notoriously difficult enterprise, and the key words have apparently been tested, but some are debatable; one could ask why FRIGHTENED was chosen and not FEAR or AFRAID.
2) Coverage - which words are included. I sought in vain for LAYOUT and FORMAT (both of which could have neatly fitted under the key word DESIGN), while on one page (1066) I found QUACK (cross-referenced to DOCTOR), QUALMS, QUANDARY, QUEASY, QUELL, QUENCH YOUR THIRST, and QUIBBLE. It is difficult to imagine that frequency has been used as a guiding principle, as is claimed.
3) The lists of cross-referenced words. These I found rather annoying and difficult to follow. They interrupt the flow of the key words and despite the alphabetical ordering are not always easy to locate. For instance, CHANGEABLE on page 202 comes six pages after CHANGE (a key word). I suspect the designers must have considered putting them in an index, rather than dispersing them throughout the book. On balance, I think this would have been preferable.
4) The menus following the key words. These are sometimes confusing, for example, what is the difference between 'about something or someone' and 'to be about something or someone' (under ABOUT)?
5) The definitions. These are sometimes laboured and/or circular, for example, this one for BE A CERTAINTY: 'if something is a certainty, it is certain to happen, especially because the situation has changed and made it certain'. One wonders if the writers are not perhaps over-keen to find semantic distinctions when the choice really depends on style/formality (which is generally well handled) or the different structural possibilities that are available. And it would be advisable to look elsewhere to find out about distinctions which are more a matter of usage than meaning, for example that between ALL and EVERYTHING.

If certain aspects of the design need to be reviewed, there are others which are spot on. I have already mentioned the attractive layout. To this can be added the copious authentic examples and the fact that the designers have resisted the temptation to include slightly differing meanings of the same word under the same entry (even though this means that awareness of potential ambiguity is decreased). Above all, I would praise the extensive inclusion of expressions. In ordinary dictionaries they tend to get lost, partly because it is difficult to locate them, and also because they are seen as colourful but complicated alternatives to real words. Here for the first time they are on a par with single word lexical items; SPLIT HAIRS can take its rightful place alongside QUIBBLE, NITPICKING, PEDANTIC and FUSSY.

Use

Who will use the book? A number of factors lead me to believe that will predominantly appeal to advanced users of English, especially those with a professional interest in the language, translators for instance. In particular, there is the sometimes bewildering array of alternatives that is presented. For example, under 'ways of saying that something will certainly happen' we are faced with the following possibilities, which with their explanations amount to half a page of text (p.188-189):

certainly
definitely
be bound to
be sure to/be certain to
be assured of
be only/just a matter of time
cut and dried
you can bet your life/bet your bottom dollar
be a certainty
be a foregone conclusion
for sure

It is not so much the level of the definitions (the 2000-word Longman Defining Vocabulary is used) as the sheer effort involved in reading that may put off users (not to mention the need to find the right key word and then the right specific meaning from the menu beforehand). This might defeat all except those who have an urgent need (e.g. finding the 'mot juste' for a translation), or who are already familiar to some extent with the items. Intermediate learners may make some headway with certain of the easier and less extensively realised concepts, but it would be dangerous for them to tackle more.

Having limited the potential audience in one direction, I would like to suggest an extension in another. I think the book can be very useful for teachers of English (including native-speakers); I found myself continually arrested by interesting juxtapositions. The Activator could be applied on training courses to make teachers and trainees aware of the semantic relationships between lexical items, and in particular of the central, not marginal, role played by expressions and idioms.

Another dimension of use for the Activator could well be as a source of practice for learners. No doubt a workbook to accompany it is in the pipeline somewhere, and this would be no bad thing, provided that it is context-based, aims at the right level of learner, and seeks to impart the strategies needed for vocabulary selection (as a supplement to other approaches to vocabulary learning), as well as to activate particular items.

To sum up then, I believe this is a very valuable addition to the English language learner's armoury, despite its minor 'drawbacks' (cross-refer to DISADVANTAGE, sub-meaning 2). It is good, and can only get better. One wonders, since in retrospect it is such an obvious idea, why it has been so long in coming. The answer must be that it is such a monumental task; those involved can congratulate themselves on a job well done. I suspect it will not be long before other publishers bring forth rival offerings; imitation is still the sincerest form of flattery.

Finally, let me offer another clue to the importance of a new work: the length of the review itself. This one could have been much longer; nevertheless, according to this criterion, the Longman Language Activator rates highly.

A First Handbook of the Roots of English by Norman Bird

Lapine Education and Language Services Ltd, 1990

ISBN 1-872701-00-0

Reviewed by Valerie Pickard

The winner of the 1994 American Spelling Bee competition won the coveted trophy on the word *antediluvian*. This does not at first appear to be a difficult word, however to spell it correctly the winner had to know that the *ante* here means 'before' (as in *ante meridiem)* rather than 'against' (as in *antithesis*). The former is an Italic root while the latter is Hellenic (Greek). According to Bird's introduction to his *First Handbook of the Roots of English* a clear understanding of the origins of words may lead to better spelling.

The *Handbook* organises the most frequent words in English into six separate sections: Germanic, Italic, Hellenic, Celtic, Other Indo-European and Non-Indo European. Each section has a brief introduction explaining how words from the different languages made their way into English and what proportion of present-day English they constitute (e.g. 40% of the most frequent words are of Germanic origin). Thus, the *Handbook,* may function as a useful aid to organising and increasing one's knowledge of word derivations.

As indicated in the title, this is the ***First*** Handbook of the Roots of English, and as such it is both unique and experimental with all the attendant advantages and disadvantages this implies. It is the first book in English, for example, to be organised along the lines of an Arabic dictionary, i.e. in alphabetical order of roots. However, the author never actually defines the term "root" as used in the *Handbook*. Likewise, there is an extremely useful index of roots which gives an example of each Germanic, Italic, Hellenic and Celtic root occurring in an English word and deriving from the same original Indo-European root. Though it is fascinating to see what these roots have in common (e.g. how do we derive *teach, dictionary* and *desk* from the same root?), the impact of the index is lost as the columns are not given clear headings which means the reader must either remember the order of the languages or constantly refer to the explanation which precedes the index. The above weaknesses notwithstanding, the *Handbook* may prove a useful resource for teachers grading and producing vocabulary teaching materials, as in addition to the origin, the approximate frequency of each root is also indicated.

This is not the sort of book that you will want to read from cover to cover, but is a reference you can dip into with delight over the years.

Conference Reports

The Ninth European Symposium on Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), Bergen, Norway, August 2-6, 1993.

Desmond Allison

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The series of LSP Symposia is organised on behalf of the AILA Scientific Commission on Language for Special Purposes. The conferences are held every two years (the tenth symposium will be in Vienna from 29/8 to 1/9/95). The local organising committee for the ninth Symposium comprised staff of the University of Bergen and the Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration. The symposium was attended by 225 participants from 37 countries. These included many European states, some of recent (re)formation (e.g. Slovakia, Croatia, Latvia); there were also representatives from the U.S.A., Chile, Venezuela, Israel, Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Zimbabwe and Thailand, as well as the territory of Hong Kong (with staff from Baptist's College, C.P.H.K. and H.K.U.).

Several speakers, taking their cue from the opening plenary lecture (Prof. Christer Lauren, Vaasa, Finland), identified two LSP traditions. Prof. Lauren himself spoke from a predominantly continental "European" perspective that focusses on theory of terminology and on such applications as the standardisation of terms in the translation of specialised discourses. There is an emphasis upon language for special purposes, tending towards special languages for narrowly identifiable ends, and upon LSP as a scientific undertaking. The European LSP tradition and related intellectual trends (notably textlinguistics: de Beaugrande and Dressler) were well represented at the symposium. The second, more "Anglo-American" tradition was alluded to by Lauren, and was elaborated upon - and identified with - by the second plenary speaker, Prof. Thomas Huckin (Utah, U.S.A.). This LSP tradition is less tightly defined in terms either of language or of methods, and is predominantly concerned with language (teaching) that is oriented towards the special purposes of individual learners and of groups of users (including what Swales and others call "discourse communities"). Part of what impressed me about the symposium was the way in which this initial dichotomisation served as an heuristic device to help people of quite varied research and professional interests better appreciate other perspectives and reflect anew upon their own concerns. The symposium remained refreshingly free of the kind of trivial polemics to which a less felicitously handled polarisation might have given rise.

The programme included eight plenary lectures and over 100 papers and workshops (parallel sessions of up to six at a time). Prominent topics included modality and hedging in areas of specialist discourse (from science to law), verbal concept representation, genre analysis, computers and LSP, curriculum design and languages for business. A historical perspective on LSP and genres was in evidence in several papers and one workshop; there was an interesting combination of empirical (frequency) data and informed speculation about changes within discourse communities or in the status of knowledge claims in disciplines over time. The variety of topics was such that participants had to construct their own programmes. Most of my own choices were made between papers relating to curriculum design in LSP teaching and work on modality in academic and scientific discourse. I attended a number of sessions on genre analysis ("Genre Analysis in LSP Teaching" being the topic of my own paper) but otherwise tended to choose the studies of modality and hedging, these being topics of considerable interest which also carry

implications for the teaching of academic reading and writing. Modality (and aspect) contribute substantially to discourse coherence and to the nature of the knowledge claims advanced in a text or paper, and failure to recognise and interpret these contributions can induce serious misunderstandings. The papers by Banks ("Hedges and how to trim them"), Hunston ("Modal meanings in the structure of argumentation"), Schramm ("On the use of tense and aspect in creating coherence in EST texts") and Kourilova ("Some problems posed by the system of epistemic modality in scientific discourse") were among the more noteworthy. Other themes included metaphor in specialist writing (Stälhammer: "The `market': a changing word in a changing world" gave a stimulating overview of personification of "the market" in the English and Swedish language press) as well as other rhetorical conventions in scholarly articles (papers by Lindeberg, Valle, and a workshop convened by Gunnarson). I missed most of the sessions relating to computing but did attend a demonstration on the use of CD-ROM corpora, at which I was able to collect addresses and information to pass on to colleagues.

Discussion time, while restricted, was well used, and follow-up comments or requests for further information and papers were common. An atmosphere of pleasant efficiency and professionalism prevailed and made the occasion worthwhile. Among the papers I obtained was a copy of de Beaugrande's plenary lecture (ably read in his absence by his colleague Dressler) entitled "Special Purpose Language and the Discourse of Epistemology: The Case of Jean Piaget". Several other contributors have promised to send copies of papers or (less commonly) had copies available; as these were two-way exchanges, I remain hopeful.

Two plenary lectures stand out, for different reasons. Prof. Thomas Huckin's session "Local Knowledge, Global Dreams" offered an excellent discussion of the tensions between particularity and universality in the field of LSP teaching. The pressures towards generality (publishing for a mass audience; career building through international acclaim) have long been well known and in some measure critically appraised; the converse need to validate local experience and the exploration of particular contexts has now (rather paradoxically and belatedly) become more widely recognised and valued in mainstream professional circles. Ethnographic studies and postmodern perspectives were cited and were related to the building of a possibly better motivated professional discourse in LSP.

Dr. Françoise Salager-Meyer (University of the Andes, Venezuela) spoke on "LSP and the Third World". Citing Fairclough and Phillipson, she raised important questions of power, interests and values in the propagation of English, in particular, as the dominant language in scientific and academic discourse. Limiting her comments to situations where English is a foreign rather than a second language and is not the main medium of education, she advocated more attention to other world languages, criticised the dominant publishing interests that tended to give preference to English, and questioned claims that students need to be specifically taught to read scientific discourse in English in addition to experience in their own medium of education (Spanish, for instance).THE

Listening to this plenary lecture in the context of Huckin's earlier lecture at the symposium was an interesting if slightly curious experience. "Local knowledge" in many third world contexts has long included a clear recognition that the teaching of English (and other languages and subjects) is in the interests of donor countries in aid projects, and that such programmes need to be monitored to ensure that they are also in the interests of receiver countries and their populations. Such insights are now much more fully articulated within the "global" realm of international conferences and publications than used to be the case. Valuable as this generalisation of the issues may be, their (re)investigation and appraisal in local contexts remains an important and problematic challenge in and beyond the 1990's.

Encouraging features of the symposium were a clear recognition of the limitations of specialised empirical studies, on the part of people understanding and undertaking such research, and a strong concern for ethical implications of academic and professional specialisations and concomitant language planning and use in contemporary societies.

16th Language Testing Research Colloquium, Washington, D.C. 5-7 March 1994.

Vivien Berry.

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The annual Language Testing Research Colloquium (LTRC) is traditionally held in a different North American city in early Spring each year, 1994 being the turn of Washington, D.C. A notable exception, and interesting precedent, was the 15th LTRC in 1993 which was not only held in Europe for the first time but was sited in two different countries - England (Cambridge) and Holland (Arnhem). This year the hosts were the Center for Applied Linguistics, George Washington University and the National Foreign Language Center, all located within the Georgetown area of Washington. All three sites were used for presentations on consecutive days and, following tradition, all papers were given in plenary thus allowing participants to hear all papers without having to make choices between parallel sessions as is the case with most conferences.

The theme for LTRC 1994 was ***Current Issues in Language Testing Research.*** This might at first appear to be far too broad since it would be hard for any researcher not to be able to propose their own research as being a 'current issue' - if you're doing it, it's an issue to you and if you're doing it now, it's current!. However in language testing, as in any other area of applied linguistics, some issues are either more important in terms of generalizability or perceived as potentially more useful to develop and consequently receive more research attention than others. Two complementary issues which appear to be more prominent than others in the nineties are broadly concerned with 1) the potential roles of multi-faceted Rasch measurement and Generalizability theory in the development of performance based assessment procedures and 2) the role played by individual differences in test-taker characteristics on language test performance.

The first theme, concerned with psychometric issues, and which also largely dominated LTRC 1993, was the subject of two pre-colloquium workshops held at CAL for two days before the conference proper began. Both the workshops were concerned with many-facet Rasch analysis, the first being on advanced topics, the second session was an introduction: both workshops were conducted by Mike Linacre, the author of the *FACETS* computer program. Papers addressing various psychometric issues were offered by Buck, who made an eloquent plea for considering the nature of multi-dimensional data and the fundamental assumptions inherent within when analysing tests, Chalhoub-Deville, Davidson, de Jong & Kaftanjieva-Stoyanova, who, like Buck, illustrated the dangers faced by using statistical models which do not fit the data, Hart-Gonzalez, Lynch & McNamara, and Weigle who talked again about using the *FACETS* computer program to model rater training effects. Although FACETS is undoubtedly one of the most powerful developments in test analysis, audience reactions suggest that I may not be alone in hoping LTRC 95 will not be dominated by discussion of its merits!

In fact the second major issue, the effect of test-taker characteristics, is the theme for 1995, so it can be hoped that when computer programs are mentioned it will be simply in the context of the tests they analysed. This was done extremely well this year in a paper by Wigglesworth, who discussed how the nature of candidate discourse can differ according to variation in task type (information gap or lack of information gap). Other presentations which dealt with learner characteristics included my own paper on *Personality characteristics and the assessment of spoken language in an academic context*, and papers by Alderson & Steel, Brown,

Green, Halvari and Milanovic & Saville. An absolutely fascinating presentation by Monikowski outlined the problems associated with developing and administering a cloze test in American Sign Language - those of us involved in developing tests should realise how lucky we are not to face the sorts of problems she encounters.

Although there were no keynote addresses this year, papers were presented by Alan Davies and Tim McNamara, each of which could be taken to be, in different ways, 'state of the art' reports. McNamara offered an overview of models of performance in second language performance tests and discussed their implications for research on aspects of the validity of such tests; Davies argued that language testing research needs to pay closer attention to work in second language acquisition (SLA) research in order to develop the strong plausible hypotheses it needs for progress in construct validation.

In addition to paper sessions there were ten poster sessions where each presenter was given five minutes to present their work in plenary, followed by a two hour session (with refreshments provided!) where participants could follow-up on work which interested them. This is, I think, a particularly good way to discuss research being planned or in progress or tests currently under development. At LTRC at least, considering the people who presented posters (Gary Buck & Carol Taylor, Fred Davidson, Brian Lynch, John Upshur, etc.), there is certainly no sense of offering a poster somehow being inferior to presenting a full paper.

There were also a series of three hour workshops on a wide variety of topics, roundtable discussions and a site visit to the Center for the Advancement of Language Learning in Arlington, Virginia. As with all good conferences, there was a splendid dinner on the second night, after which the 2nd TOEFL Award for outstanding Ph.D. dissertation was presented to Antony John Kunan of U.C.L.A. (the first having been awarded to Gary Buck in Arnhem in 1993).

Report on the RELC Regional Seminar, Singapore, 18-20 April 1994.

Theme: Reading and Writing Research: Implications for Language Education.

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The aims of the Seminar (Programme, p.1) were:

1. To aquaint language educators in the region with current reading and writing research findings and their implications for language education in Southeast Asia;

2. To discuss the developments, issues and directions in reading and writing instruction in the first/second/foreign language situation in the region;

3. To provide an opportunity for language educators and reading and writing researchers to constitute themselves into a network of interested professionals to do collaborative research projects and/or regularly exchange research findings to increase instructional effectiveness in reading and writing classrooms.

'Language educators' and 'reading and writing researchers' are not discrete groups; much of the research that was reported at the Seminar was undertaken by language educators and contributed to the development of more fully articulated theories of literacy and language learning. This reciprocal relationship between 'research' and 'language education' was brought out in a number of keynote addresses (e.g. Goodman; Raimes). The point is not only that any reflective enquiry by teachers (e.g. into why something 'works' in one class but not in another) is already 'research' (Raimes), but also that some of the more sustained and published applied work leads to refinement or reconsideration of theoretical models themselves (Goodman).

Two comprehensive models presented at the Seminar were Goodman's transactional socio-psycholinguistic model of reading, writing and tests, an expansion of Goodman's earlier more psycholinguistically oriented work, adding a sociocultural perspective that, as the speaker acknowledged, owes much to Halliday's functional account of language, and Brumfit's overview of language, literacy and learning, in which he claimed that a comprehensive model must contain at least four perspectives, namely those of 'Heritage', 'Growth', Functional literacy' and 'Critical awareness'. Other familiar issues included the status of genre-based approaches to language and language teaching and their relationships with 'process approaches' in the classroom as well as 'critical awareness' perspectives. Two notable speakers on genre were Rothery and Christie. the novelty, though not the significance, of critical language awareness perspectives was called into question by some speakers at the Seminar, including Christie and Brumfit; their value was notably recognised and illustrated in a paper by Kramer-Dahl.

Illuminative data presented in the course of the Seminar included work that compared think-aloud protocols with written outcomes and identified composing skills (Lockhart and Ng; Varghese); studies of how reformulations affected text revision (Hoffman; Piper); accounts of written work produced under varying task and interactional conditions (Allison, Berry and Lewkowicz; Lewkowicz; Porter & O'Sullivan); studies of how and why work of different scholars is cited and attributed in academic writing by students (Moore) and by published writers (Pickard); interviews with student writers (Tse); etc. Littlewood's keynote address on 'Writing and Reading

as a Joint Journey through Ideas' combined a discussion of principles with exemplification of students' writings (video obtained by English Centre).

Issues noted for discussion in the final symposium on Reading and Writing at the Tertiary level (held in parallel with two other sessions concerned with other contexts of education) were:

1. What does it mean to teach writing as a process?

2. How important is knowledge of 'genre' for L_2 writers? Should learners be explicitly taught to produce different genres?

3. Is there a unified academic discourse community and, if so, what are its standards and how should they be addressed?

4. Many students see their assignments as exercises in displaying knowledge before readers who are already familiar with what they will say. How, then, can we help them to feel engaged in a real process of communication?

The Seminar was well organised and extremely courteously administered, and amply achieved the stated aims. The opportunities for formal and informal academic and professional interchange have effectively extended communication networks for researchers in and around the region, ensuring exchange of findings and opening up possibilities for future collaboration. The importance of institutional support for research and development as a function of effective education deserves to be emphasised in the light of comments made in the opening address of the 1994 RELC Seminar by the Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture: any truly committed approach towards advanced literacy requires us to be concerned with whole systems, including funding and resourcing decisions, and not only with isolated pedagogic practices. Opportunities for academic interchange - and, more generally, respect for academic time as an aspect of academic freedom - should therefore be strongly encouraged in any institution or society that is concerned to promote the advanced levels of literacy that are appropriate to the aims, aspirations and present developmental level of the community in question.

International Conference on Indigenous Knowledge and Cultural Interchange: Challenges to the Ideal of University. Changsha, China, May 23rd-26th, 1994.

Alastair Pennycook

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Perhaps one of the most remarkable things about this conference was the setting: It was held in Yuelu Academy at Hunan University, an ancient academy of learning originally founded in 976. For those of us who have become jaded with the circuit of international conferences in look-alike hotels around the world, it was indeed a pleasure to be seated in the newly restored Confucian Hall of Learning or taking a walk around the beautiful and peaceful gardens. The conference itself was no less pleasurable. This was the second in a series of international conferences around the theme of universities and cultural interchange (the last one, "Knowledge across cultures: Universities East and West" was held in Toronto in 1992), cosponsored by Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, the China Education Society and Technology, Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Hunan Educational Press, Hubei Educational Press, and Hunan Provincial Education Committee.

Apart from many academics from all over China, including Tibet and Xinjiang, the conference attracted participants from Africa, India, Malaysia, Korea, Japan, Denmark, Britain, Canada, USA and Hong Kong. Keynote addresses included Tu Youngang on "Culture graft and higher education", Steinar Kvale on "Evaluation as institutional censorship of students and of knowledge", Ali Mazrui on "Higher education and mass media: allies or adversaries?", Syed Hussein Alatas on "Knowledge and morality in the development of humans", and Ashis Nandy on "Indigenous knowledge and challenges to the idea of the university". In the other sessions there was a broad diversity of topics, from computer culture and campus culture at Chinese universities to postmodernism and Chinese science, from the role of women in higher education in Xinjiang to education and social change in China, from reconstructing the colonized mind to postcolonial culture in Chinese art education. My own paper on the role of English in promoting or obstructing indigenous knowledge and culture was quite well received.

As the conference progressed, various themes and dilemmas emerged. One concerned the threat to traditional forms of Chinese knowledge and culture posed by the shift towards a market economy. Clearly there were difficult struggles going on here: in the wake of educational and economic reforms in China, universities are caught between competing pressures to move away from the older Soviet university model, to make changes in university structures that reflect international educational changes, to make up for a shortage in funding by creating links with the business community and to try to maintain traditional Chinese ethics and values. As Chinese universities try to navigate through these tidal waters, there are clearly a number of tensions between different views on tradition and modernity, socialism and market economies, liberal and technological education. Another interesting challenge arose from a questioning of the singular use of "indigenous knowledge". While China clearly needs a strong concept of indigenous Chinese culture and knowledge around which it can formulate strategies to ward off the incursion of Western culture and knowledge, there is an obvious danger that in doing so it is ignoring the diversity of knowledges in China: where, it was asked, was the space here for Tibetan, Uighur, women's or workers' cultures and knowledges?

Despite some of the difficulties that arose in trying to provide simultaneous or subsequent translation (Chinese to English or English to Chinese) for all presentations and despite the

occasional feeling that at times different participants were asking such different questions about education that we had little common ground, this conference was a great success in promoting the discussion of a wide range of questions among such a broad variety of academics. The size and organization of the conference was also such that it was possible to have many long and interesting informal discussions with other participants without having to missing presentations to do so. Many of us are now looking forward enthusiastically to the next conference, to be held in Nanjing.